The assumption that poverty and gender inequality push women to exchange sex for material support is increasingly used to explain the continued spread of HIV throughout sub-Saharan Africa and consequently to inform policy. Based on one year of anthropological field research, this case study from rural Malawi comes to a different conclusion. While the findings confirm that the sexual and relationship choices of village women put them at increased risk of contracting HIV, the study shows that their choices result from a careful balancing of personal wants and community rules, rather than from acute destitution. Among the factors that impact this ‘balancing act’ are the strict but not necessarily unequal division of gender roles, the vital importance of conforming to cultural norms, and suspicion towards women’s independence. Related factors are the patterns of matrilineal and matrilocal organization, the outmigration of men, the traditional valuation of sex, and fatalistic attitudes towards HIV and AIDS. In conclusion, this study argues that the ‘transactional sex paradigm’ fails to acknowledge the major role played by cultural conventions, the complexity of women’s economic survival strategies, and the agency that women exert in upholding the prevalent gender norms.

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Balancing men, morals and money
Balancing men, morals and money

Women’s agency between HIV and security in a Malawi village

ACADEMISCH PROEFSCHRIFT

ter verkrijging van de graad van doctor
aan de Universiteit van Amsterdam
op gezag van de Rector Magnificus
prof. dr. D.C. van den Boom
ten overstaan van een door het college voor promoties
ingestelde commissie,
in het openbaar te verdedigen in de Agnietenkapel
op dinsdag 1 oktober 2013, te 12:00 uur

doort

Janneke Pieteren Elisabeth Verheijen

geboren te Delft
Promotiecommissie

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This study was supported by the Netherlands Ministry of Foreign Affairs through the IS-Academy programme on HIV/AIDS at the Amsterdam Institute for Social Science Research of the University of Amsterdam.
Dedication:
To all Mudzi women
Contents

Acknowledgments x

1. INTRODUCTION: THE TRANSACTIONAL SEX PARADIGM 1
   Aim and argument 1
   Rationale 2
   The field study 10
   Outline of book 19
   Access to ‘raw’ data 20

2. A HISTORY OF GENDER ROLES, FOOD INSECURITY AND AIDS IN MALAWI 21
   Introduction 21
   Geography and demography 22
   Changing gender ideologies and realities 24
   Food insecurity 37
   HIV and AIDS 42
   Conclusion 49

3. MOVING TO MUDZI: AN INTRODUCTION TO THE RESEARCH SITE 53
   Introduction 53
   Mudzi daily life 59
   Poverty levels 65
   Gender relations 74
   Conclusion 84

4. KNITTING NARRATIVES: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY 85
   Introduction 85
   Research approach 87
   Researchers 105
   Justification for a focus on women 113
   Ethical considerations 114

5. WOMEN’S SEXUAL RELATIONSHIP CHOICES 117
   Introduction 117
   Riskiness of relationship practices 121
   Deconstructing the discourse of destitution 160
   Discussion and conclusion 163
List of figure

1.1 ‘The HIV/AIDS-food insecurity syndemic’ 6
2.1 Timeline of the agricultural seasons in Malawi 40
2.2 HIV prevalence in age and sex groups 43
3.1 Map of Balaka district in Malawi 54
5.1 Average number of births per month between 2004 and 2009 at the nearest health clinic and Balaka hospital 126

List of photos

2.1 Billboard in Malawi 48
3.1 The village mosque 55
3.2 A typical Mudzi house 60
3.3 Cooking nsima 60
3.4 Bathing place and pit-latrine 61
3.5 One of the larger, iron-sheeted houses of Mudzi 61
3.6 Before and during the rainy season 62
3.7 Women at Mudzi’s water pump 63
3.8 Mudzi’s (occasional) grocery store 80
4.1 – 4.4 Impressions of our Mudzi house 89
4.5 – 4.6 Learning to make pottery 98
4.7 – 4.9 The ‘knitting club’ 99
4.10 – 4.14 Participating in village activities 100-101
4.15 Market near Mudzi 103
Acknowledgments

This study has been commissioned and co-funded by the IS-Academy, an initiative of the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs. In alliance with various knowledge institutes in the Netherlands, the IS-Academy aims to stimulate communication and collaboration between policy makers and social scientists for the benefit of sustainable poverty reduction and development. In the case of this study, the co-funding partner was the Amsterdam Institute of Social Science Research (AISSR) of the University of Amsterdam. I much appreciate the opportunity granted to me by both institutes to undertake this study.

Of all the individuals who have had a part in the completion of this study I first and foremost wish to express my gratitude to all inhabitants of the villages that I call Mudzi in this study. Despite their fears and suspicions they allowed me and my research assistant Gertrude to stay in their midst and probe into the intimate details of their lives. I will never be able to repay them for the precious insights they offered me into the daily life reality of poverty at its starkest: Ndikukuthokozani kwambiri.

Secondly, zikomo kwambiri to Gertrude – you know I could never have accomplished this without you! Keep up following your dreams: may you succeed in fulfilling them all

Many thanks to my promoters (PhD advisors) Professor Sjaak van der Geest and Professor Anke Niehof for their continuous guidance, intellectual input, and kind support. I very much appreciate that Sjaak made the effort to visit us in Mudzi and see with his own eyes what I have tried to describe in this book. Also thanks to my fellow PhD students and other affiliates of the AISSR for taking the time to read and provide valuable comments on drafts of my chapters, in particular Erica van der Sijpt, Marieke van Eijk, Ellen Blommaert, Daniel Reijer, Sasha Ramdas, Eileen Moyer, and Fiona Parrott. Serena Cruz of the International Institute of Social Studies has also been of help with her enthusiasm about my study, our inspiring lunches, and her constructive comments on my concluding chapter. Thanks too to Erin Martineau for editing the text, and Nina Kleingeld for editing the lay-out.

My parents have both been tremendously important in the coming about of this book. My father was always the first to read my chapters and has provided many valuable comments, particularly in the last phases of finalizing this dissertation he has been my manager and my wit; my mother has spent many days caring for my daughter Robinson to give me time to write. In lots of other ways too they have always made me feel thoroughly supported: ik ben jullie oneindig dankbaar. I am furthermore grateful to all others who have regularly babysat so that I could work:
Noor en Teun, Pieta and Cor, Elisabeth and Tamas, and Tjeerd and Annika.

I also wish to thank my friends in Lilongwe, with whom I stayed during stopovers and who entertained me during much-needed breaks: Frauke and Saqib; Manon, Pieter and Simon (and Lusa); Marjolein; and Monja. Rarely have I been happier than in your company! To my friends in the Netherlands (and Mexico!) I apologize for my negligence over the past years. I sincerely hope I can make it up to you now that I have finished this dissertation.

Furthermore I wish to acknowledge Dr. Jane Alumira, who has in her own way stimulated me to pursue this PhD path. A warm thanks to those who backed me up during and after my years at the International Crops Research Institute for the Semi-Arid Tropics in Malawi, particularly Dr. Isaac Minde and Dr. Moses Siambi, Hazel Warren, and Gray Nanthoka, but also the rest of the Chitedze staff.

Lastly but certainly not least, my loving gratefulness to Feye, without whom I probably would not have stuck it out during the years in Malawi prior to this study’s fieldwork, and who had to endure much stress and chagrin from me whenever I felt that I lacked time to write; to Robinson who provided highly pleasant distractions and best succeeded in reminding me that there is more to life than this dissertation; and to the baby in my belly for her apparent impatience to join our family.

Janneke Verheijen,
Juni 2013
Introduction:
The transactional sex paradigm

Aim and argument

The aim of this book is to test, through a Malawian case study, the hypothesis that improved livelihood security for women will lead them to make safer sexual choices. This hypothesis arises from the widespread assumption, especially prevalent in public health and development literature, that poverty and gender inequality push women to take sexual risks. Perceived as poor and marginalized, African women are often assumed to have few other means to survive than to exchange sexual favours for material support from men. This dependence on male support, the assertion goes, puts women in a disadvantaged position when it comes to negotiating safe sexual practices, while also pushing them to seek multiple sex partners – hence significantly increasing the risk of HIV transmission. To reverse the downward spiral of poverty and AIDS, many reports conclude, it is imperative to economically empower women so as to reduce their need to resort to risky ‘survival sex’. As this line of argument has become so commonplace, and goes uncontested in so much of the literature, I refer to it here as the ‘transactional sex paradigm’.

Based on the insights gained through anthropological research I argue that this transactional sex paradigm, which is increasingly used to explain the continued spread of HIV throughout sub-Saharan Africa and to consequently inform policy, overlooks certain important cultural and socio-economic aspects of women’s sexual choices. While confirming the widespread assumption that the need for support plays a role in poor women’s decisions to readily accept sexual proposals from men, my data demonstrate that the interrelations between livelihood insecurity and risky sexual behaviour are more complex and less straightforward than usually presumed.

Rationale

Ever since HIV and AIDS were first discovered in the 1980s, their prevalence has been disproportionally high in sub-Saharan Africa. Although this region is inhabited by only 10 percent of the world population, over two-thirds of all HIV-infected people live here (UNAIDS 2010). Not only the scale of the pandemic in sub-Saharan Africa seems exceptional, so too do the key groups that are affected. On other continents, HIV was (and still is) largely transmitted through unprotected sex between men and the sharing of needles among intravenous drug users – thus mainly affecting particular minority groups of the population. In sub-Saharan Africa, HIV has spread and continues to spread predominantly through unprotected heterosexual intercourse, affecting both men and women in the general population. Furthermore, sub-Saharan Africa is the only continent where more women than men are infected with HIV.

Medical scientists initially sought out biological causes for these striking deviations (Hunt 1996), but have found no conclusive explanation. Social scientists then began their search for distinctive cultural traits that might be held responsible for the apparently divergent pattern of the African pandemic. Caldwell et al. (1989) in particular made a strong case for the uniqueness of “the African system” of marriage and sexuality, which they characterized as geared towards high levels of (lineage) reproduction. This, they argued, resulted in weak conjugal bonds, a general lack of moral boundaries regarding sexual permissiveness, and encouragement of sexual networking, thus greatly facilitating the spread of HIV on the continent. The recognition that sexual behaviour is not merely the result of individual decision making, but is to a large extent conditioned by one’s social environment, has been valuable and lauded (e.g. in Hunt 1996, Parker 2001). However, the Caldwells’ thesis, and consequently anything that reeks of it, has become discredited. The main critiques are directed at its perceived racism, sweeping generalizations, and the erroneous conclusion that a lack of a ‘Eurasian’ morality (emphasizing female chastity and monogamous conjugal bonds) implies that African cultural systems would have no sexual restrictions or guidelines at
all. This last point is refuted by our own data too, as I describe in Chapter 6. Our data confirm, however, some essential points of the Caldwells’ argument, which I will elaborate upon in the Conclusion.

Meanwhile, national and international HIV-prevention strategies have focused particularly on informing the public about the existence of a new fatal virus and about ways to avoid infection. This focus on changing individual behaviour reveals the general perception that protection against HIV was first and foremost people’s personal responsibility. The efforts had an impressive impact on the levels of AIDS awareness among all strata of the African population. This, however, did not lead to the expected behaviour change at any significant scale – which added to the puzzlement about the African AIDS pandemic.

Some scholars grew increasingly uncomfortable with the emphasis on individual responsibility for prevention, and on cultural factors as determinants of involvement in high-risk sex and as obstructions to safer sexual conduct. When AIDS epidemics in other ‘underdeveloped’ settings began to evolve towards a socio-epidemiological pattern similar to that of sub-Saharan Africa, which until then had been considered unique, discussions of structural vulnerabilities to HIV infection gained prominence. In these settings, as in sub-Saharan Africa, HIV prevalence rose particularly fast among women, even leading UNAIDS and others to speak of a “feminization of AIDS” (e.g. Akukwe 2005, Corby et al. 2007: 11, CHGA 2004: 11, Kaplan 1995, Rodrigo & Rajapakse 2010: 9). This rise could not sufficiently be explained by the fact that women are biologically more susceptible to HIV infection than men, as this goes for all women worldwide while the pandemic was feminizing only in certain – impoverished – settings. As a result of these dynamics, the combination of poverty and gender inequality entered the stage as the new main culprit of the AIDS pandemic in sub-Saharan Africa.

Medical anthropologist and physician Paul Farmer (1992, 1998, 1999, Farmer et al. 1993) in particular has been credited for drawing attention to the role of social inequalities in facilitating the spread of HIV, based on his observations in Haiti.

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3 Including poor inner-city neighbourhoods in the United States (e.g. Kaplan 1995, Sobo 1005)
Currently, roughly 60 percent of all people living with HIV in sub-Saharan Africa are women. In the Caribbean this is estimated at 45 to 50 percent, in Asia and Latin America 30 to 40 percent, and in Central Asia and Eastern Europe about 30 percent (Rodrigo & Rajapakse 2010: 9).
4 Biologically, women are more susceptible to HIV infection as the female genital tissue is more easily damaged than that of male genitals, semen contains higher concentrates of the virus, and semen comes in larger quantities than vaginal secretions (Farmer et al. 1993: 387). Nicolosi et al. (1994) found that the risk of infection of male-to-female transmission was 2.3 times greater than that of female-to-male transmission.
5 But see also Bassett & Mhloyi (1991), Schoepf (1988, 1991), and Packard & Epstein (1991) for other early accounts of structural vulnerability to HIV.
pointed out the material obstructions to health faced by many marginalized people, and unravelled the historical economic and political processes that helped to shape these. He urged anthropologists to shift their focus from cultural particularities to the “mechanisms by which poverty puts young adults, and especially young women, at risk of HIV infection” (Farmer 1995: 13). Brooke Schoepf (1998: 230), based on research in what was then called Zaire (now Democratic Republic of Congo), formulated the following answer to this call:

Most women, including faithful wives, are unable to negotiate safer sexual practices with partners whom they know or suspect have multiple partners. When men refuse condoms, women without independent incomes cannot refuse risky sex. Powerlessness in the face of a dreaded disease leads many women to deny their risk. In the presence of HIV, what was once a survival strategy for poor women [maintaining sexual relationships with men for support] leads to AIDS and death.

Amidst the continued biomedical focus on personal responsibility, and social scientists’ search for cultural vindications, linking exposure to HIV infection (and other diseases) with low socio-economic status was ground breaking. Many scholars and policy makers adopted these pioneers’ line of argument, and continue to subscribe to it.

The vulnerability (or ‘structural violence’) perspective seemingly solved the puzzlement about the consistently reported gap between increased HIV awareness and the lack of behaviour change throughout the African continent, and offered a welcome new entry point for addressing this problem. In this view, women do not demand or even suggest safer sexual practices. Indeed, women’s lack of control over their sexual lives, if not their entire lives, is central to most accounts of female vulnerability to the risk of HIV infection. Addressing this powerlessness, then, is held to be the pivotal means to reduce the incidence of HIV transmission and contain the pandemic. As Conroy & Whiteside (2006: 56-7) argued specifically for the case of Malawi

Gender inequality is arguably the most significant driver of the AIDS pandemic in Malawi. It is inextricably linked to poverty. Women have less access to education, employment and

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8 Farmer et al. (2006: 1686) defines structural violence as: “[O]ne way of describing social arrangements that puts individuals and populations in harm’s way. … The arrangements are structural because they are embedded in the political and economic organization of our social world; they are violent because they cause injury to people. … Neither culture nor pure individual will is at fault; rather, historically given (and often economically driven) processes and forces conspire to constrain individual agency.”
credit and are extremely vulnerable when their husbands die or if their marriages split up. Until women are given more opportunities to live independently of men (if this is their choice) or the power to negotiate their sexual relationships as equal partners with men, the spread of HIV in Malawi will not be halted.

Similar calls for women’s economic empowerment as key to halting the African AIDS pandemic gained strength throughout the international community.9

The ‘transactional sex paradigm’

Poverty drives the [AIDS] pandemic as poor women and children are forced into transactional sex in order to get money to survive. They are often fully aware of the risks but have no choice. The imperative for short-term survival in a desperately poor environment forces people into behaviours that place them at direct risk of infection (Conroy & Whiteside 2006: 66).

The link between HIV/AIDS and poverty … has a clearly gendered dimension. Many of the poorest in Africa are women who often head the poorest of households. Inevitably such women will often engage in commercial sexual transactions, sometimes as commercial sex workers, but more often on an occasional basis, as survival strategies for themselves and their dependents. The effects of these behaviours on HIV infection in women are only too evident, and in part account for the much higher infection rates in young women who are increasingly unable to sustain themselves by other work in either the formal or informal sectors (Freedman & Poku 2005: 679).

Women, in particular, often find themselves in situations where they are subject to greater HIV susceptibility, as a result of sexual violence, or economic hardship which forces them to trade sex for food (FAO 2003: 2).

Without adequate schooling, with limited skills, deprived of a social network and feeling isolated, adolescents in these situations risk growing into young women with no economic assets. Their bodies become their main asset and their only source of bargaining power or income (Urdang 2007: 7).

If the choice is between HIV/AIDS or starvation, HIV/AIDS or losing the farm, HIV/AIDS or no schooling for your children, many, if not most [poor African women], who no longer have assets to sell, sell sex (Bie 2007: 29).

The combination of poverty and gender inequality has come to be considered by many analysts a main driver of the AIDS pandemic in sub-Saharan Africa.10 As the above assembly of quotes illustrates, advocates of the vulnerability approach often point particularly to poor women’s involvement in sexual exchange relationships to

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typify how the forces of poverty and gender inequality combine to drive the spread of HIV (see also Figure 1.1). As noted, I refer to this widespread explanatory model for Africa’s high – and African women’s disproportionately high – HIV rates as the ‘transactional sex paradigm’. In an earlier publication on this topic (Verheijen 2011), I have called it the ‘transactional sex model’. I believe, however, that the word ‘paradigm’ is better suited than the more neutral term ‘model’ because it conveys the taken-for-granted, matter-of-fact nature of this particular explanatory model.

Figure 1.1: “The HIV/AIDS-food insecurity syndemic” from Himmelgreen et al. 2009: 402. Note that transactional sex is depicted as a significant link in the ‘syndemic’.

The taken-for-granted nature of the concept of ‘transactional sex’ appears not only from the fact that no attempt is made to formulate a universally agreed-upon definition, but, worse, that often no definition is formulated at all. In many reports, both scholarly and policy-oriented, the term (or similar denotations like ‘survival sex’) tends to be mentioned as a matter of fact.11 Only in some cases can the authors’ interpretations be discerned by reading between the lines. Doing so reveals that these interpretations actually vary widely, ranging from explicit commercial exchange of one specific sex act for an agreed-upon quantified reward (e.g. Robinson & Yeh 2011) to something that may in fact entail nothing more than the cultural custom of young men paying their date’s drink (e.g. Conroy & Whiteside 2006: 60). The concept of ‘transactional sex’ is thus used to cover a

11 Notable exceptions are De Zalduondo 1991, Luke 2005b, and Nobelius et al. 2010 in which criteria for different types of sexual exchange are theorized upon.
range of sexual-economic exchanges, and many authors seem either unaware of this possible variation, uncertain where on the spectrum to locate what they see, or uncomfortable with calling it prostitution yet unable to conceptualize it otherwise. Most commonly, the terms do not refer to women who self-identify as sex workers, but to ordinary women receiving money, gifts, or favours in return for sexual relations (e.g. GoM 2011a: 181). Generally, such exchanges are straightforwardly interpreted as men’s exploitation of women’s sexuality. The grand scale at which material transactions in sexual relationships are found to occur in sub-Saharan Africa is taken as indication of the profundity of African women’s dependence on men, and the severity of their socio-cultural and consequently economic subordination.

Numerous studies have attempted to find evidence for the commonly assumed link between women’s low socio-economic status, transactional sex, and HIV risk. Notably, the findings of these studies vary widely. Scholars have found that material motivation for involvement in sexual relationships is mentioned by women all over the continent. Receipt of money or gifts within a relationship is furthermore often found to be associated with reduced negotiating power for women regarding the conditions of sex, and so with increased HIV risk. But the extent to which women’s involvement in such relationships is driven by social powerlessness and economic destitution is highly disputed. Of the – certainly not comprehensive – list of studies under review here (see Appendix 1 for overview), almost as many found (or assumed to find) a direct correlation between women’s low socio-economic position and their engagement in transactional sex as not. The methods of inquiry, research setting (specific country; urban or rural), age, and gender of informants vary more-or-less equally between the two groups of studies and can thus not help to explain their contradictory findings. I believe that the divergence indicates more than anything else the difficulties in studying, and, particularly, interpreting the topic of ‘transactional sex’.


Difficulties arise from the intimate and sensitive nature of sex in general, which inhibits participant observation\textsuperscript{15} while providing motivation and opportunity for misrepresentation by informants in their self-reports. By far most studies on transactional sex in sub-Saharan Africa necessarily base their conclusions on such self-reports, be it through survey questionnaires, focus group discussions, in-depth interviews, life histories, or diaries. As a result, these studies’ findings are likely to represent dominant discourses or socially desirable responses rather than actual practice.\textsuperscript{16} Moore et al. (2007: 45) furthermore found that respondents’ answers to enquiries about transactional sex are highly sensitive to the exact formulation of the questions posed. One can imagine the miscommunication, and resultant misrepresentation and misinterpretation, when researcher and researched have different understandings of exactly where on the ‘spectrum’ the relationships at stake are positioned, as often seems to be the case (see Luke 2005b, and Tawfik & Watkins 2007 for elaboration).

Another characteristic of the body of literature on transactional sex in sub-Saharan Africa is the bias towards youngsters as the research population.\textsuperscript{17} This is not surprising, considering the fact that the disparity between numbers of male and female HIV infections has long been most significant among the younger sexually active age groups. In 2008, UNAIDS reported that in sub-Saharan Africa about 75 percent of all HIV infections in the age group 15 to 24 fell among women (UNAIDS 2008c: 1). Two additional factors may help to explain the widespread focus on youth in studies on transactional sex. Firstly, some researchers seem to assume that sexual-economic exchange relations are only engaged in prior to marriage, hence by premarital boys and girls (e.g. Moore et al. 2007: 48). Certain risk factors related to transactional sex – multiple sexual partners and high rates of partner change – also seem to be considered as primarily practiced by women before they properly settle down and marry. Secondly, an explicit or implicit association of transactional sex with the rise of capitalism, consumerism, and thus modernity seems to often underlie the choice of youth as research group, and, related to this, an urban setting as research location. Possibly, older age groups are considered more conservative and less induced to engage in such a presumably modern phenomenon as sexual-economic exchange. This corresponds to a theme that has


been common throughout the history of anthropology, namely the (presumed or anticipated) breakdown of traditional norms due to modern influences, particularly the introduction of money (Moore & Vaughan 1994: 156-62, Parry & Bloch 1989). In this view, sexual-economic exchange is essentially a new phenomenon, triggered by the destruction of age-old societal guidelines and a replacement by novel constructions of identity, desire, and success (e.g. in Adomako Ampofo 1997: 178, Barnett & Whiteside 2006: 91, De la Torre 2009: ix, Luke 2003: 77). Some scholars maintain that this social and economic upheaval has intensified women’s need for support and reduced their access to traditional safety nets such as a stable marriage, thus pushing them into informal prostitution. Many of the urban youth studies (and others) emphasize, however, that luxury commodities rather than basic resources for survival are the substance of exchange, and that women – rather than being victims – are often active agents in pursuit of material gain. Most studies point out that gifting is actually part and parcel of all (premarital) sexual relationships, and not related to a woman’s level of destitution. A number of authors see this as resonant with precapitalist partnering practices and argue that sexual-economic exchange is rather a continuation of age-old customs than (solely) the result of recent disruptions (e.g. Cornwall 2002, Helle-Valle 1999: 379-80, Leclerc-Madlala 2003: 32, Nobelius et al. 2010: 499, Van den Borne 2005a).

Recent quantitative and qualitative studies suggest that condom use among African youth is on the increase and HIV incidence on the decline (Hargreaves et al. 2007, Leclerc-Madlala 2002: 25, Pettifor et al. 2008: 1, UNAIDS 2008c: 3). In Malawi, HIV prevalence among young women aged 20 to 24 has even halved, from 13 percent to six percent between 2004 and 2010 (GoM 2012: 2). Prevalence continues to rise, however, among women aged 30 to 39. With rates already over 20 percent, by far most women living with the virus fall within this age group. Relatively little is known, however, about the sexual (exchange) choices of this group of prime-age women – presumably because many researchers consider them ‘off the hook’ once ‘properly’ married. The high level of HIV among these women tends to be explained as resulting from promiscuous husbands who transmit the virus to them. The transactional sex paradigm comes in to clarify why these women passively accept the risk posed by their husband despite their awareness of HIV and AIDS: they need his support for the survival of themselves and their children. No further inquiry seems needed.

Despite the substantial call for female economic empowerment in order to halt the AIDS pandemic, very few efforts have actually been made to realize this (Kim et al. 2008: 66, Piot et al. 2008: 845). The few that have entail microcredit schemes directed at vulnerable women (e.g. SHAZ in Zimbabwe, IMAGE in South Africa, TRY in Kenya; see Ashburn & Warner 2010, Kim et al. 2008, Lukas 2008, Wojcicki 2005, and Urdang 2007 for reviews), cash transfer programs (e.g. RESPECT in Tanzania, Zomba Cash Transfer Program in Malawi, and the Malawi...
Incentives Project), and food aid targeted at “at-risk women and girls to help avoid survival sex” (C-SAFE). Some of these projects have managed to reduce poverty levels, food insecurity, and gender-based violence; improve women’s vocational capacities and overall nutritional levels; and increase school attendance and (self-reported) safer sexual behaviours. Notably, however, none of these projects seems to have led to actual, statistically significant reductions in HIV incidence among the women involved (Kohler & Thornton 2011: 12, Pronyk et al. 2006, Rodrigo & Rajapakse 2010: 9, Wojcicki 2005: 4, Lukas 2008: 7), although two of the cash transfer programs had at least a partial impact on reducing teenage pregnancies among school dropouts (Baird et al. 2010) and STIs (De Walque et al. 2012).

The field study

In this book I critically assess the transactional sex paradigm. Instead of merely trying to establish whether or not poverty promotes sexual risk taking, I turn the question around and assess whether the oft-made policy recommendation that economic empowerment will lead women to make safer sexual choices is justified. This reversal allows for a broader understanding of the multiple co-factors that encourage high-risk sex and inhibit behaviour change.

I build my argument on ethnographic data that I collected with the invaluable help of my research assistant Gertrude Finyiza, during a nearly one-year field study, lasting from August 2008 to July 2009. Obviously the study of one particular locality, as thorough as it may be, cannot be the basis on which to refute or confirm a global paradigm. Moreover, the specific site in which this study was conducted has some extraordinary features which make it unsuitable to even pretend to be representative, as we shall see further on. Instead of vainly attempting to find a research site that could, with some goodwill, be considered an ‘average’ village, be it Malawian or even African, I selected a site that is extreme in various ways, so hoping to amplify the dynamics under study. By assessing these amplified dynamics with an in-depth, up-close-and-personal focus, this study is intended to function as a magnifying glass. The details that are so revealed help to nuance and enrich our understanding of what at first sight tends to be called ‘transactional sex’.

Malawi is one of the least developed countries worldwide. Of all 187 countries on the Human Development Index, only 16 are calculated to be less developed than Malawi, and of these many are, unlike Malawi, involved in or recovering from conflict. Two-thirds of all Malawian households cannot produce nor purchase the minimum level of 2200 kilocalories per person per day (Sahley et al. 2005). Almost half of all children under age five in Malawi are stunted and 20 percent are severely stunted (GoM 2010a: 130), statistics which are considered clear indications of chronic malnutrition (Devereux et al. 2006b). Within Malawi, poverty and malnutrition are most severe in the rural areas (GoM 2010a: 22, 130, 148) and in the Southern Region (GoM/WB 2006: 4).
Ever since HIV prevalence became monitored, Malawi has been among the top ten countries with the highest infection rates. It is currently estimated that 11 per cent of the population between the ages 15 and 49 lives with the virus. As is the case throughout sub-Saharan Africa, infection rates are higher among women (13%) than among men (8%) (GoM 2012: 12). As in most of the world, prevalence is currently higher in the urban areas (17%) than in the rural areas (9%), but is increasing in rural areas while diminishing in urban areas (UNAIDS 2010: 18). HIV rates have always been substantially higher in the Southern Region (15%) than in the Central (8%) and Northern (7%) Regions (GoM 2012: 13). Although national HIV prevalence has slowly declined,\(^{18}\) HIV incidence\(^{19}\) remains highest in the Southern Region (\textit{ibid}: 19).

Because, as noted, both poverty and HIV prevalence are extraordinarily high in Malawi, peaking in the Southern Region and on the rise in the rural areas, I estimated that a possible link between the two may be most pronounced and best discernible here. A village community in one of Malawi’s southern districts was therefore selected as research site for this study. To protect the privacy of my informants I do not disclose the village’s real name, but call it ‘Mudzi’. All adult Mudzi women were included in the research, but we focused particularly on those of prime-age: women who had a household to run and children to care for – hence those supposedly most in need of support.

\textit{Matrilineality}

Intriguingly, most village communities in Malawi’s south are matrilineally and matrilocally\(^{20}\) organized. Descent and inheritance are traced through the female

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\(^{18}\) Estimates of HIV prevalence in Malawi peaked in 1999, when it was calculated to be 16.4 percent, after which it began to decline (GoM 2010b: 2). The downward adjustment of the prevalence estimates may, however, at least partly be attributable to more accurate calculation methods rather than an actual reduction of HIV transmission (UNAIDS 2006: 10).

\(^{19}\) While ‘HIV prevalence’ refers to the total number of people living with the virus, ‘HIV incidence’ refers to the number of new infections that occur within a certain period, in this case the year 2010. Incidence is generally considered a better epidemiological indicator, because prevalence also depends on mortality rates. Especially when effective treatment becomes available and accessible, as it has in Malawi, prevalence statistics may distort a good impression of the evolution of a local epidemic. Even if no new infections occur, the total number of people living with HIV will increase simply because the medication prolongs the lives of those who would otherwise have died. Incidence is, however, more difficult to measure, and often we need to depend on prevalence rates as an indicato.

\(^{20}\) Matrilocality refers to the marital residence pattern in which a man moves in with his wife’s family. In the literature on southern Malawi, usually this term is used, although some speak of ‘uxorilocality’. Uxorilocality refers to the cultural rule that a man after marriage moves to his wife’s residence. Both terms have some truth in them: in the matrilineally organized communities of southern Malawi, men live in their wife’s house, which is commonly next to the houses of her matrikin (mother, grandmother, sisters). In this study I will predominantly use the term ‘matrilocality’ to emphasize that women generally continue to live amongst their close relatives.
bloodline. It is the women who hold the rights\textsuperscript{21} to land and who remain resident near their (maternal) kin. Upon marriage a woman is joined by her husband, who is supposed to help cultivate her field and build a house that is hers to keep in case of divorce. Various studies found that, as a result, these women’s livelihoods are relatively secure compared to that of other rural Malawian women (Chimbuto 2011: 39-40, Davison 1997: 121, Mwambene 2005, Peters et al. 2007, Rensen 2007, Shah et al. 2002).

In other words, the very site that was selected because of its extremely high levels of both food insecurity and HIV prevalence – which, following the transactional sex paradigm, would suggest a low socio-economic status of women vis-à-vis men – seems a quite favourable one for women. Whereas women’s increased vulnerability to HIV has been associated with the “lack of ownership over land and other important resources, leading them to have scarce opportunities for an independent life” (Haram 1995: 34), this does not apply to my research population. Moreover, statistics on HIV prevalence among the different ethnic groups in Malawi reveal that the highest rates are found among matrilineal groups\textsuperscript{22} while the lowest rates are among patrilineal groups\textsuperscript{23} (GoM 2011: 198). Hence, when comparing women who hold the right over land and ownership of their house with women who do not, it is the former who are most likely to be or become infected with HIV. This seems to contradict the general assumption that it is disempowerment and destitution that put women at increased risk of HIV infection, thus testing the widespread belief that economic empowerment for women will reduce HIV transmission. Although the correlation between matrilineality and higher HIV risk need not be a causal relationship, matrilineal women’s comparatively good socio-economic position makes them interesting to study, as an analysis of their sexual choices may shed light on the hypothetical impact that female economic empowerment might have on HIV transmission.

Christine Saidi (2010) has recently argued, as George Murdock (1959) did earlier, that originally all Bantu people were organized matrilineally. Many of these groups have over time developed into patrilineal societies, as further described in Chapter 2. Nonetheless, a so-called ‘matrilineal Bantu belt’ continues to run from Namibia, Angola, and Congo, through Zambia, Tanzania, and Malawi to Mozambique. Within Malawi approximately 57 percent of the population adheres predominantly to matrilineal organizing principles (MHRC 2005: 31).

\textsuperscript{21} This right is formally called ‘usufruct’ and refers to a right to decide about the use of a specific plot of land. Actual ownership of all land is perceived to be in the hands of a community’s paramount leader: historically the chief, later the national president. Nonetheless, these days at least, the usufruct right to land can be (informally) sold or rented out.

\textsuperscript{22} Lomwe at 17 percent, followed by the Nyanja and Mang’anja at 15 percent, and the Yao at 13 percent (GoM 2011: 198).

\textsuperscript{23} According to the 2010 national population census Chewa, Ndali, Nkhonde, and Tumbuka have the lowest prevalence compared with other ethnic groups, at 7 percent each (GoM 2011: 198).
Early anthropologists emphasized that women’s power and autonomy within a matrilineal system should not be overestimated. Instead of obeying their father and, later in life, their husband, these anthropologists claimed, women were expected to obey their mother’s brother and later their own brother(s) (Lawson 1949: 181, Mitchell 1962: 33, Richards 1950). The notion that men hold power over their sisters’ children rather than their own puzzled the famous anthropologist Audrey Richards and her followers (e.g. Douglas 1969, Lévi-Strauss 1949, Schneider & Gough 1961), who foresaw a “conflict between the legal duty to the maternal nephew, and a man’s natural desire to benefit his own sons” (in Peters 1997a: 128). Furthermore, men’s authority over their sisters and sisters’ children seemed difficult to reconcile with their residence in their wife’s village, which completed the so-called ‘matrilineal puzzle’. However, according to several authors, this puzzle is at least in the case of Malawi largely based on patriarchal misconceptions of matriliney (Mandala 1984, Morris 1998: 23, Peters 1997a). Regarding male dominance and female subordination as naturally given, early ethnographers tended to observe their study populations through a strongly male-focused lens. Their misperception may not only be attributable to these patriarchal presumptions, but also to the local men who were consulted, some of whom seem to have invented certain ‘age-old customs’ which served their personal ambitions rather than represented usual practice24 (Chanock 1985 in Kaler 2001: 545, Rogers 1980: 125-8, Moore & Vaughan 1994 in Saidi 2010: 17).

Since the 1970s, studies became more gender sensitive due to feminist influences and indeed contradicted the earlier studies of matriliney. They showed that matrilineal women held considerable power, and that the matrilineal kinship system did not collapse under pressure as previously predicted (Brantley 1997, Davison 1997, Mandala 1984, Moore & Vaughan 1987, Phiri 1983, Peters 1997a, 1997b, Saidi 2010, Vaughan 1987). Although these studies do not deny that certain principles, norms, and practices of matriliney have been and still are changing in various ways among different groups, they indicate that overall matriliney has remained remarkably resilient to external patriarchal influences. The classic misconception of matrilineal societies as essentially patriarchal continues to prevail among some contemporary scholars of Malawi, however, leading to incorrect assumptions that land and power positions are inherited by men from their male matrikin (e.g.

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24 For example, in a colonial attempt to document the inheritance law of the matrilineal Yao of southern Malawi, Ibik (1970) recorded that: “If, as is usual, land is allocated to a man in his wife’s village, all rights in respect of such land are exercisable only with the consent of the wife’s kholo [the oldest living ancestress of matrilineal relatives]” (Ibik 1970: 18, italics added). Although Ibik correctly noted the final authority of the wife’s matrikin over land, he seems ignorant of the fact that, as a rule, land among the Yao is inherited from mother to daughter.

Despite persistent erroneous presumptions by some, the ‘matrilineal puzzle’ has proven largely groundless as it was based on a misunderstanding of inheritance rules, an overestimation of male authority, and an ethnocentric interpretation of the sentiments felt for different categories of kin. From my data, however, something else emerges that does seem puzzling: the insistence of Mudzi women on their need for male support to survive – even though, as women, they have entitlement to land and thus primary access to food. In principle, men can only obtain a roof to sleep under and a field to eat from through marriage, which would theoretically put them at a disadvantaged position. Many of my informants explicitly subscribed to the transactional sex paradigm, emphasizing their dependence on men and the fact that poverty pushed them into sexual relationships in order to access support – despite cultural constructions suggesting otherwise. A quick-fix study based on these women’s self-reports, then, would confirm their general depiction as marginalized and in need of empowerment – which is, however, a far from complete representation of their daily life realities. Throughout this book I assess and combine bits and pieces of our field findings so as to eventually ‘solve’ this new ‘matrilineal puzzle’.

Research question and operationalization

Underlying most studies of transactional sex lingers the basic question of people’s motives for engaging in sexual practices that they know are risky in a context of high HIV prevalence. This study is no exception. During our fieldwork, I wanted to assess the actual riskiness of women’s relationship choices, to what extent these were spurred by a dependency on men, and what leeway women had to act otherwise. As noted, I wanted to find out in particular whether increased economic independence for women would lead them to make safer sexual choices; in other words, whether it is primarily the dependence on male support which keeps women from adopting safer sexual practices.

Several concepts need to be defined here in order to become applicable. In the previous paragraph the terms that call for further specification are ‘risky’ and ‘safer sex’. In the public health literature, HIV risk basically refers to “an observed characteristic which raises the odds of being infected” (Barnett & Whiteside 2006: 85). More specifically, these characteristics generally are related to the timing of sexual debut, the consistency of correct condom use, and the number and types of sexual partners (e.g. GoM 2010b: 37-39). In the context of Mudzi, as we shall see in further chapters, risky behaviours entail low condom use, frequent partner change, partner concurrency, remaining with a promiscuous partner, and low levels of inquiry into the marital and health history of a new partner – or, more generally, any sexual or relationship practice that increases exposure to HIV infection. The
term ‘safe sex’ would then be the opposite of ‘risky sex’, hence any sexual or relationship practice that limits exposure to HIV. In Chapter 6 on sex, HIV, and AIDS I delve deeper into these concepts.

The somewhat vague concept of ‘livelihood’ has already been mentioned and will resurface throughout this book; it requires clarification as well. Livelihood has been described as a combination of the resources used and the activities undertaken in order to make a living (DFID 2001). These resources may consist of individual skills and abilities (human capital), land, savings and equipment (natural, financial, and physical capital, respectively), and formal support groups or informal networks that assist in the activities being undertaken (social capital). This last term, ‘social capital’, will be discussed and described in depth in Chapter 7. When the resources and activities to make a living are sufficiently ensured, we can speak of ‘livelihood security’ – and, if this is not the case, of ‘livelihood insecurity’. I will sometimes use these terms more-or-less interchangeably with food (in)security, even though the term of livelihood (in)security has been deliberately introduced to acknowledge that there is more to a ‘good living’ than merely sufficient food (Baro & Deubel 2006: 528). Nonetheless, in a setting like Mudzi, livelihood security to a great extent coincides with and depends on food security. The common definition of ‘food security’ is having at all times physical and economic access to enough food for a healthy and active life (FAO 2006: 1). It has been pointed out, and will become clear throughout this book too, that food security is not only about food availability, but very much about safeguarding the entitlements required to access food (FAO 2006: 1, Mtika 2000: 346, Sen 1981: 2).

The term ‘household’, inconspicuous as it may seem, is another term that has received considerable theoretical attention. Use of the term has been criticized for its insinuation that members of a household form a homogenous entity committed to a common goal, hence obscuring competing intra-household interests, unequal power structures, and negotiation processes (Chant 2003: 18, Doss 1999, Manuh 1998, Mayoux 2006, Niehof 2010, Quisumbing & McClafferty 2006). I most certainly do not subscribe to the ‘homogenous entity’ thesis, as will become clear throughout this book. I furthermore do not consider Mudzi households to be static entities, but as changing in composition, especially since husbands frequently move in and out. The exact composition may be hard to define even at one specific moment because the status of an (ex-)husband may remain vague for periods of time. When I use the term ‘household’, I intend it to refer to the group of people who share a house, kitchen, bathing place, toilet, and granary (or whichever of these structures are at place). At the very least, a household in Mudzi contains one woman. She may share her household with a husband, (classificatory) children, (classificatory) grandchildren, and her (classificatory) brother and moth .

Related to the often indeterminate nature of households is the – probably surprising – need, at least in the context of Mudzi, to specify the use of the terms ‘husband’,
‘wife’, ‘married’, and ‘unmarried’. I will not do so here but in Chapter 5 on sexual relationships. For now I merely want to make a case against the presumption, common among many social researchers, policy makers, and development practitioners, that these concepts can be unproblematically transported to and from research populations. In particular, the assumption that such terms refer to a fixed and indisputable characteristic, rather than a dynamic, transitory, subjective, and value-loaded status proves misleading in the case of Mudzi.

In contrast, the specific understandings of the concept of ‘gender’ usually are reflected upon in research and policy publications. It is commonly pointed out that gender refers to socially and culturally constructed identities, rather than a biologically determined one – an understanding with which I concur. Gender norms prescribe what behaviours, beliefs, and attitudes are appropriate for and expected from men and women. A ‘gender contract’ refers to “the understood but invisible agreements which regulate relations between men and women” (Kimane & Ntima-Makara 1998: 124); this proves a fruitful notion in the analysis of sexual-economic exchanges in Mudzi. Although the term ‘contract’ may suggest that a process of overt negotiation and conscious approval from all parties preceded the establishing of clearly determined, static rules, this meaning is not intended here. Instead, gender norms and contracts tend to be tacit, and may differ by time and place – also within a particular cultural setting. They are processual in nature, as they are constantly reproduced and reconstructed by the people subject to them, although seldom in a discursive way. This interaction between human action and societal structures that both shape action and result from it leads us to one of the most fundamental theoretical debates in the social sciences and one that is central to this book, too: the structure-agency debate.

The theoretical concept ‘agency’ forms an important theme throughout this book. The concept refers to the human capacity to act and make choices, the capacity to accomplish desired goals. Niehof (2007: 189) has described agency as “conscious action aimed at achieving certain outcomes, with the actors concerned considering the efficacy and appropriateness of their behaviour in a given context that comprises the institutional and normative environment within which daily life is enacted.” These institutional and normative environments, both of which result from complex historical, cultural, and material interactions, may be described as the ‘structures’ that guide and restrict an actor’s agency. Poor African women are often compassionately depicted as lacking the opportunities to get a grip on their lives – to exert agency – because this is impeded by disempowering cultural norms and socio-economic marginalization (Higgins et al. 2010), hence by debilitating structural forces. The women I encountered in Mudzi seemed far removed from this stereotype. This is not to suggest that these women are the opposite – free agents who can and do act as they please. Within the social sciences, debates on agency versus structure, as related debates on empowerment versus disempowerment, have
often revolved around the question of which one prevails over the other, which one best represents reality. The ‘old’ wave of HIV-prevention efforts, still widely practiced, builds on the assumption that human behaviour results primarily from individual agency, and can thus be changed by merely informing individuals about risk and protection. In reaction, the now widely called-for ‘new’ wave stresses that external structural forces – particularly gender inequality and economic deprivation – constrain human agency beyond individual will and thus must be removed before behaviour change can occur.

Women’s use of their sexuality to reach certain goals is a particularly interesting theme for the structure-agency debate. The topic of sex exchange has long triggered discussions on whether it is a sign of women’s empowerment or disempowerment – in other words, whether women involved in such exchanges should be considered potent agents taking advantage of men’s sexual drives, or involuntary victims forced to risk their lives. Advocates of the transactional sex paradigm have a strong tendency to embrace the latter view. Moving away from applied science, policy making, and development practice into the theoretical realms of the social sciences, a more dual or interactive understanding of and approach to structure and agency prevails. Here, it has become increasingly recognized that structure and agency should not be considered mutually exclusive dichotomies, with one separate from and taking precedence over the other (Nguyen & Stovel 2004: 10). Giddens’ structuration theory (1984) has been principally influential by pointing out that human action and structural constraints are in fact inextricably interdependent, each one shaping the other. Structures guide action, but at the same exist only by virtue of human actions that produce and reproduce them.

The question to ask, then, is not which conceptualization is most ‘true’, but rather how agency and constraining structures interact (Dolfsma & Verburg 2005: 6), and how this interaction creates certain outcomes. The notion of ‘relational autonomy’ has been suggested to capture the social embeddedness of agency; employing this concept allows one to “explore the space between women’s victimization and oppression and women’s active response to these conditions, and in so doing helps to dislodge the victim/agent dichotomy” (Schneider 1993: 84). This is exactly what I try to do throughout this book. In the concluding chapter, I will return to the structure-agency debate and touch upon the bridging theoretical idea of ‘structural change’, as this may help us to think of new policy directions for addressing women’s sexual risk of HIV infection.

In his book *The practice of everyday life* (1984), Michel de Certeau pointed out that social scientists should – rather than studying a society’s institutions or ‘structures’ (e.g. traditions, language, discourse) – examine the ways in which

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these are practiced and reappropriated in everyday situations. What this theoretical framework adds to the structure-agency debate is the distinction he makes within the concept of agency between strategies and tactics. He restricts the concept ‘strategy’ to powerful agents in the position to develop and endorse society’s structures. Ordinary people, De Certeau argues, can only resort to ‘tactics’. Tactics merely entail a dealing with and responding to the existing structures. They pertain to the everyday practices in which society’s rules and products are recombined and subverted in ways that are influenced, but rarely pre-determined, by those very rules and products. Populations are thus not passive subjects of their culture’s structures, but may adjust these – within socially acceptable limits – to their wishes and needs through tactics. These tactics never overtly challenge a society’s structures, but rather function to create room for manoeuvre behind an appearance of conformity. Tactics allow actors to seize opportunities when they arise, but not structurally create them. Such tactical manoeuvring is at play in many of Mudzi’s women’s actions. I believe it may be too static, however, to assume that ordinary people’s tactics can never contribute to shifts in their culture’s structures. I return to this in the concluding chapter.

Although I use ‘agency’ to mean the capacity to make choices and act towards a certain outcome, this is not to suggest that Mudzi women make coherent choices within a clear and consistent vision about long-term goals they aim to achieve. Far from it. As just noted, their actions tend to be reactive rather than strategically planned. The outcomes they act towards at any one point in time tend to be multiple, often divergent, and at times contradictory. Under different circumstances they may well combine the various considerations at play in an alternative order, leading to other outcomes. These outcomes must then somehow be incorporated in their ‘walk of life’ as they go along, so that their actions often become justified at hindsight rather than beforehand. The concept of ‘judicious opportunism’ will prove enlightening for unravelling and understanding Mudzi women’s often pragmatically ad hoc livelihood strategies. This notion derives from the work of Jennifer Johnson-Hanks (2005) on the marital and reproductive choices of young Cameroonian women, which challenges the common theorization of action as fulfilling a prior intention by discussing how her informants tend to move back and forth between multiple strategies in a fairly ad hoc manner and without a clear trajectory in mind. Recognizing the unpredictable nature of their fragile livelihoods, the women try to keep open as many alternatives as long as possible, to allow the seizing of a promising opportunity whenever and wherever it may arise.

Strongly related to the dual approach to structure and agency, and helpful for further understanding of how Mudzi women navigate sexual relationships, is the theory of social exchange (Blau 1964, Emerson 1962 in Hyden 2008). This theory asserts that power (commonly defined as the capacity to achieve impact, e.g.
Nyanzi et al. 2005: 14) is not absolute, but arises from mutual dependence. Each person in any type of relationship holds some degree of power over the other, and whoever is most dependent on the relationship at any particular moment is at that time the least powerful. As we shall see in the following chapters, this is highly applicable to sexual relationships in Mudzi.

Outline of book

In this first chapter I have laid out the research focus and the reasoning behind it. I have noted some of the theoretical debates for which my data may be of interest; these are interwoven throughout the analysis of my data rather than elaborated upon in one designated ‘theoretical’ chapter. The next chapter offers a historical background to the study, with a particular focus on the topics relevant for the overall research question: the evolution of gender relations, the underlying causes of today’s poverty, and the development of the AIDS epidemic in Malawi. This is not simply a pro forma background chapter, as the historical analysis reveals some important first hints towards answering the research question. In Chapter 3 I zoom in on Mudzi village and introduce its inhabitants. This chapter includes a ‘visual’ tour through the village, and a description of women’s daily lives and the high but varying degrees of livelihood insecurity that they face. Here I begin to assess how the historical processes described in Chapter 2 materialize in the lives of men and women today. I thus portray the research site prior to presenting the research methodology, because the community’s characteristics to a great extent conditioned the methods used for data collection. The efforts of my research assistant Gertrude and me to collect relevant data are described in Chapter 4. These are largely classical anthropological methods, but with an unconventional and perhaps controversial twist.

The second half of this book contains the main ethnographic chapters. Each addresses a different aspect of the overall research question: Is an independent income for poor women likely to affect their sexual choices? The first two ethnographic chapters revolve around these sexual choices, and the second two around money flows and income generation. In Chapter 5, I delve into the relationships choices of Mudzi villagers. My focus is on women’s considerations concerning their sexual relationships with men as culturally appointed providers of support, and as prerequisite for but also potential threat to their social status. I furthermore dissect women’s widespread resort to a discourse of poverty used to justify their involvement in (multiple) sexual relationships. The men’s side of the story is touched upon where relevant. In Chapter 6 the focus shifts towards women’s choices concerning actual sex acts. I assess how sexual ideologies shape sexual practice and vice versa. I also describe how HIV and AIDS are perceived and dealt with (or not). Chapter 7 turns to village economics, as I assess how
money comes into the community and subsequently flows through it. This analysis reveals the high value that villagers attach to social capital – the social relations that they can fall back upon in times of need. Sexual relationships are assessed from these insights into the need for social capital. Finally, in Chapter 8, I describe women’s options and their limitations in generating an independent income, the ambivalence with which this is surrounded, and the repercussions it may have on their access to other resources.

Combining the data presented in the preceding chapters, Chapter 9 aims to formulate an answer to the overall research question on the viability of reducing risky sexual behaviour by increasing women’s independent income. I discuss the implications that my analysis has for further research in this issue as well as for policy making.

Access to ‘raw’ data

‘Raw’ ethnographic data commonly consist of an abundance of qualitative fieldnotes. Throughout most of anthropology’s history, the generally bulky size of such data inhibited making them accessible for a wider public. Ethnographic output was necessarily limited to the arguments and conclusions deduced from the raw data, at best supported with carefully selected fragments of fieldnotes. Obviously, this has always curbed the extent to which fellow scientists and other interested parties could verify the claims, or make further use of the data. Nowadays, however, advancing digital technologies have opened up ways to make accessible large quantities of data, which allows us to enhance the transparency of ethnographic analyses. In this dissertation I experiment with some of these new possibilities.

Alongside many of the claims that I make throughout this book numerical references can be found within square brackets [Px xxxx]. These codes refer to the specific paragraphs within our fieldnotes on which I built a particular claim. This allows interested readers to look up the sections concerned in our ‘raw’ data set and so gain a more thorough and more vivid sense of the real-life experiences that informed my thoughts and led to this study’s final conclusions. I am pleased that the many details that seemed lost in the synthesis are in this way not really lost. They still form part of the analyses, can be retrieved, returned to, and reassessed. Linking my claims to their origin serves as a means to ‘materialize’ and so validate my arguments. At the same time, however, it is also meant to offer readers the opportunity to form alternative interpretations.

Please note that a digital version of this dissertation will be made available in which the codes are hyperlinked to our fieldnotes, so that interested readers only have to click on a code to see the related paragraph of our fieldnotes pop up.
A history of gender roles, food insecurity and AIDS in Malawi

Introduction

Few scholars of AIDS in Africa make an effort to embed their current-day findings in a historical context. As such they miss important opportunities to deepen their understanding of and strengthen their grip on the problems and solutions they study. Unravelling how things came to be as they are should be an essential part of analysing contemporary dynamics. In this chapter I will therefore elaborate upon the historical background of Malawi, focusing on the topics relevant for this specific study: gender relations, poverty, and AIDS. Obviously one chapter does not do justice to the complex interactions that formed a nation and its people nor the variations within this nation and people. As is inherent to all social studies I have had to make choices on what to include and exclude, and how to present the multiple and at times diverging views and facts. The choices I made were to a large extent informed by the specific research questions and topics I explore in this study.

After giving a brief general impression of Malawi’s geographic and demographic characteristics, I attempt to reconstruct how power dynamics between men and women have evolved over time. As noted in Chapter 1, the majority of Mudzi villagers descends from a matrilineal Bantu group, mostly the Yao. Some

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2 Of all interviewed women, 58 percent are of Yao descent, 23 percent are from other predominantly matrilineal Bantu origin (16% Lomwe, 4% Nyanja, 3% Chewa), 12 percent descend from predominantly patrilineally organized groups (10% Ngoni, 2% Sena), and 7 percent are uncertain because their ancestors descend from different ethnic groups.
anthropological researchers of southern Malawi have chosen not to refer to the (mixed) ethnic designations of their study population but instead consider them a regional people who share language as well as many social and cultural characteristics (e.g. Peters 1997b). However, as the Yao stand out as the majority of Mudzi villagers, and by having a history distinctive from all other matrilineal groups in Malawi, I believe it is relevant to assess their specific ethnic background in more detail. In this chapter I therefore pay particular attention to the historical development of gender relations in Yao society. By following a conventional chronological order, this section provides a general overview of Malawi’s history, albeit with a perspective that focuses on gender.

Following this demographic overview, I describe the severe and deteriorating situation of poverty in Malawi. The Malawian population is largely rural and dependent on small-scale subsistence farming, conducted under adverse circumstances. The livelihood insecurity they deal with on a daily basis is situated at the barest level of finding enough food to eat, or not. The focus of this section therefore is the (under)development of the agricultural sector and the resultant fragility of most Malawians’ food security.

Lastly, I describe relevant aspects of the AIDS epidemic in Malawi – its evolution, its current status, the factors that are assumed to drive the continuing spread of HIV, and the national attempts that have been made to temper this spreading.

Geography and demography

Malawi is a relatively small but densely populated country, landlocked between Tanzania, Zambia, and Mozambique. It is globally one of the least developed nations, ranking number 171 of all 187 countries on the Human Development Index of 2011. Over three-quarters of the population live below the official international poverty line, meaning they have less than two US dollars per day to spend (UNDP 2005). Using a nationally calculated subsistence minimum, 52 percent of the population lives below this minimum (the “poor”), and 22 percent far below (the “ultra-poor”) (GoM 2005a). Over the past 30 years the average poverty level has remained virtually static (Chirwa et al. 2008: 21, Conroy 2006: 28), but wealth inequality has increased (Peters et al. 2007: 68-74). For the majority of Malawians, life has become progressively harsher (Frankenberger et al. 2003) due to a combination of factors to be described in this chapter.

As a stretched strip of land, Malawi is subdivided into a Northern, Central and Southern Region. This elongated shape is determined partly by the plateau of the
Great Rift Valley on which it is located and partly by British colonialist whim. One-fifth of the country is covered by fresh water, mainly that of the massive Lake Malawi on the eastern border. The climate is relatively moderate because of the country’s elevation on the plateau, but gets hot in the low-lying areas in the south. Savannah woodlands – a mixture of grass, thorn bushes, and scattered trees – cover most of Malawi. The mineral wealth of the country is negligible – which is arguably an advantage, considering the many violent conflicts over the ownership of lucrative minerals elsewhere in the world.

Malawi’s high population density can probably be explained by its once comparatively fertile soils, nourished by the lake and the perennial streams flowing to the lake, amidst a drought-prone region (Webster 1980). The size of the Malawian population remained relatively high but more-or-less stable until the British colonialists came. By putting an end to inter-tribal warfare and slave trade, and bringing with it Western medical knowledge, the colonial regime prevented many deaths and disappearances (Pike 1968: 23). Fertility rates remained equally high, however, and the population expanded drastically. Being one of the first inland areas to be colonized is thought to have spurred immigration as the Europeans offered protection against slave raiders, jobs at their plantations, and education at their mission posts (Debenham 1955: 145). More recently, civil war in Mozambique drove over a million refugees into Malawi. As a result of all of these factors the Malawian population has tripled since independence in 1964, and doubled in the past 25 years (GoM 2008b). In 2011, Malawi’s population size is estimated at 15.4 million inhabitants (on average 163 per square kilometre4), and its population growth rate (2010-2015) is estimated at 3.2 (UNFPA 2011: 118). In the few cities, men are overrepresented, while about 10 percent more women than men live in the rural areas (GoM 2008b: 29) – which will prove to be a relevant factor in answering my research question.

Life expectancy in Malawi has increased over the past decennia from 38 years in 1960 to 54 in 2010, remaining significantly lower than the world average of 70 years. Over 10 percent of all children born will not survive until their fifth birthday (GoM 2011a: 96). Like child mortality, maternal mortality in Malawi is among the highest in the world, but has improved over the past decade (HDI 2011). Per one million Malawians only 20 doctors are available (HDI 2011), which is by far the lowest rate in the region (Arrehag et al. 2006: 88). Since free primary education was introduced in 1994, literacy rates have increased steadily for both men and women, now reaching to 81 and 67 percent, respectively (GoM 2011: 30). Although enrolment increased significantly over the past 15 years, less than

4 For comparison, neighbouring Tanzania has an average population density of 53 inhabitants per square kilometre, Mozambique 30, and Zambia 19 (CIA Factbook 2012).
half of the children who start primary schooling actually make it to the last grade (Field 2009: 31). About half of all Malawian youth are currently enrolled in either primary or secondary education. Notably, these students consist of boys and girls equally (GoM 2009a: 47-8). A mere 8 percent of the population has managed to complete secondary school (GoM 2011a: 26-7).

**Changing gender ideologies and realities**

Political, religious, demographic, environmental, and economic factors have affected social relations in Malawi in varying ways and to varying degrees. Overall, these factors have been found to progressively erode women’s once relatively high status. Assessing, for example, how female leadership has changed over time gives an indication of women’s devaluation in the social hierarchy. Historical reconstructions suggest that the ancestors of most contemporary Malawians originally lived in clans led by female chiefs (Phiri 1988: 2). To this day, Malawian villages can be presided over by either a male or female head. As a matter of fact, of the six sub-villages that together comprise Mudzi, four are headed by a female chief, and as a whole Mudzi is presided over by a female Group Village Head. Notably, Malawi’s current paramount leader – the national president – is also a woman. Nonetheless, at present most leaders in the higher ranks of the traditional hierarchy are males. In 2001, of the total 205 Malawian ‘Traditional Authorities’ – the highest position for traditional leaders within the current legal-bureaucratic system – only five spots were occupied by women (Field 2009: 37). In the following sub-sections the dynamics that are likely to have contributed to these changes are assessed in chronological order. It will be concluded that despite some deterioration in relative status, not all is lost for women, particularly not for those living in communities that throughout time managed to retain a matrilineal kinship organization and matrilocal residence pattern.

**Pre-colonial era: 14th century – 1891**

[A typical Bantu legend] pictures the first men as living on one side of a great river and subsisting on game, while the first women keep to the other bank and live by gathering grass seeds. One day when the hunters could not cook their meat because their fires had gone out, one of them crossed the river and met a woman who took him to her hut, and gave him porridge made of grass seeds for the first time. He said it was very nice, and he further said “I will stay and sleep here.” His companions one by one followed his example, and the institution of marriage was thus founded by the recognized exchange of meat and cooked grain between men and women (Dornan 1908: 79 in Richards 1932: 202-3).

Throughout the history of modern-day social sciences, claims have been made about a matriarchal origin of human kind (Amadiume 1997, Bachofen 1861, Diop 1989 [1963], Engels 1884, Morgan 1877, Murdock 1959, Saidi 2010). African advocates of this thesis (and their followers) emphasize that matriarchy should not
be understood as an overall dominance of women over men, but rather as referring to a system with great gender equity in which the roles ascribed to women were considered most central to the social order (Saidi 2010: 18). These highly valued female roles related particularly to procreation, food production and preparation, and management of spiritual relations. Although the argument remains disputed in general, Christine Saidi (2010) has recently convincingly argued that at least throughout Bantu history women seem to have held strong social positions in domains that cut across private and public spheres.

Caldwell et al. (1989) have attempted to sketch a unique system of marriage and sexuality that distinguished African societies from others in the world. While their model, and their attempt as such, has been severely criticized and as a result become outmoded, I believe it deserves re-examination for it has great explanatory power. One characteristic that the authors consider typical of traditional African systems is a separation of the world of women from that of the world of men, with each sex reigning in its own sphere. Women as a group, it can be read between the lines, were thus not controlled by men (Arnfred 2004b). A great emphasis placed on fertility for lineage reproduction, furthermore, meant that women’s sexuality was not as restricted as it came to be in the Eurasian world. Rather, women were highly valued for their reproductive capacities and for the ritual powers associated with this. The emphasis on the lineage necessarily meant that less value was attached to the conjugal bond, which was generally weak as a result. The once-wide spread custom of (extended periods of) post-partum abstinence was, according to Caldwell et al. (1989: 215), another distinguishing characteristic of the African system. This too may be interpreted as a sign of women’s relatively strong position in society, as it seems unlikely that men, who personally and directly suffered from this institution, would have been the ones to introduce and uphold it at such a large scale for such a long time.

Zooming in on the ancestors of most contemporary Malawians when these migrated into the Malawi area, historical reconstructions suggest that they lived in matrilineal clans led by female chiefs whose authority rested on their ritual powers, such as those related to rain making (Phiri 1988: 2, Saidi 2010: 85). Pushed by wars and diseases these iron-working Bantus had started their southward migration from Central Africa about 2000 years ago, driving the Khoisan hunter-gatherers who first inhabited the area into the Kalahari desert. By the 14th century various Bantu groups had settled on the comparatively fertile soils around Lake Malawi. A clear ‘gender contract’ divided tasks between the sexes. Women mono-polized the ancient craft of pottery and dominated in ritual activities (Richards 1982 [1956]: 38-9, Saidi 2010: 18), while men performed most physically heavy tasks like

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5 I return to this point in the concluding chapter.
hunting and clearing the fields of bushes and trees (Mandala 1984: 141-4, Richards 1939, Saidi 2010: 128). As ‘holders’ of the fields, women controlled the production and preparation of food (Koopman 1995: 4, Saidi 2010: 139), while men built and maintained the huts. Both were involved in cloth, iron, and salt making, although each had separate tasks (Mandala 1984: 141-4).

Agriculturalists in an area with enough land for all, the early Bantu-clans were a non-martial people. By the end of the 15th century a new flow of Bantu migrants managed to incorporate the small chiefdoms – which had little military power – into one federation, similar to the governing structure they had known in their original Congo region (Encyclopedia Britannica 2009). By the 17th century this so-called Maravi empire spread from the Mozambican coast to eastern Zambia and included much of current-day Malawi (Mchombo nd).

Conquered chiefs were left in charge of their clans, as long as they paid tribute in kind or labour (Mitchell 1961: 32, Rangeley 2000[1948]: 9, 58). Besides ritual specialists, chiefs now increasingly needed to become political strategists too. Those who had the military skills and resources to protect their subjects attracted most followers and so increased their strength and dominion (Phiri 1988: 15). This political military power largely became a male affair, while spiritual guidance continued to be in female hands (Mandala 1984: 143, Pike 2000: 92, Schoenbrun 1998: 91-2).

As time went by, various sub-chiefs within the Maravi empire managed to strengthen their position independent of the central authority of the paramount chief, and as a result the empire’s unity slowly began to crumble. The final deathblow to the empire was given by the attacks from two other tribes fighting their way into the southern region of Malawi in the 18th century. The warrior tribe Ngoni came from the south, fleeing Shaka Zulu. The Yao – the first tribe in the region to possess firearms – came from the east, fleeing famine and attacks from surrounding tribes that had become envious of the wealth they had managed to accumulate through trading with the Arabs and Portuguese (Rangeley 1963: 10). The Maravi

Spiritual power was first and foremost derived from and directed at appeasing the spirits of deceased ancestors. These spirits were believed to mediate between the living and a Supreme Being who controls all natural forces. It is this belief in the existence of one supreme being that distinguishes Bantu cosmology from many others in Africa. This god is considered remote and impersonal, with little interest in the daily affairs of human beings. The ancestral spirits are, however, assumed to be very concerned with the behaviour of their living descendants, watching them closely and not hesitating to interfere when necessary. Defiance in observing time-honoured traditions or neglecting or insulting the conservative ancestor spirits in other ways would be punished by disease, death, and other disasters, it was believed (Mitchell 1961: 58-61, Van Breugel 2001: 260). This belief in the power of ancestral spirits continues to be strong throughout Malawi (Harries et al. 2002: 72; Morris 2000: 221-54, Van Breugel 2001: 73-96), although it is now commonly mixed with Christian or Islamic religious beliefs (Forster 1998).

See Aguilar & Birch de Aguilar (1993) for a current-day account of the complementarity and equality of these male and female chieftainship powers.
federation broke into autonomous chieftain clans, each fighting independently against incorporation by the invaders, with varying degrees of success.

These autonomous clans to this day share oral traditions and several cultural practices, although some of their dialects have over time developed into mutually unintelligible languages (Lwanda 2004: 29, Mitchell 1956: 17). The contemporary ethnic groups Chewa and Senga (predominant in the Central Region), Nyanja, and Sena (in the Southern Region) all descend from the matrilineal Maravi people and form the majority of Malawi’s population. The invading groups were also Bantu descendants, the patrilineal Ngoni settling in the Northern and Central Regions, the matrilineal Yao in the south. The Maravi groups conquered by the Ngoni over time adopted many of their invaders’ customs, including patrilineal organization (Phiri 1988: 21).

Mandala (1984: 139) argues that the position of men in the matrilineal societies became strengthened when women began to need physical protection from their male relatives against slave raiders. This argument does not hold for the Yao, however. More than any tribe in the Maravi empire, the Yao were deeply involved in trading with the Arabs and Portuguese (Phiri 2004: 73). At least since 1730 they had travelled to the East African coast to exchange iron, ivory, and tobacco for cotton cloth, beads, and salt (Pike 1968: 69, Rangeley 1963: 9). They then travelled back inland to trade these exhilarating new commodities for more ivory, cattle, and, increasingly, slaves (Rangeley 1963: 14). Initially, the people sold as slaves were the unwanted of the villages – those convicted of a crime and the impotent who would normally have been killed or banished from their communities (Abdallah 1973 [1919]: 12, Rangeley 1963: 14). However, as the demand for slaves increased dramatically at the coast, the Yao ceased being peaceful traders and instead began raiding their neighbours to capture enough men, women, and children to satisfy this demand. Their initial monopoly over firearms and gunpowder, resulting from their early trades with Arabs and Europeans, greatly enhanced their efficacy to extort slaves by force. Only at the height of the slave-trade era, just before the Brits managed to put an end to it, did the Yao begin to raid amongst themselves (Pike 1968: 60). Yao women had thus, during much of the slave-trade era, not been overly dependent on male protection – in contrast to women from the surrounding ethnic groups.

Nonetheless, the thriving slave trade probably did improve Yao males’ relative economic status in society as only they undertook the lucrative journeys to the coast to sell slaves and return with firearms and luxuries. Some resorted to marrying slave women to gain authority and avoid moving away to a wife’s compound and “being treated as a work-horse” on their in-laws’ fields (Mitchell 1956: 412, Phiri 1983), which arguably undermined the bargaining position of free women. Van

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8 The Nyanja are also called Mang’anja (Mchombo nd).
den Borne (2005a: 143) speculates that the consequent competition between free and slave wives may have marked the beginning of women seeing men as their livelihood, which, in turn, instigated jealousy among women.

After two centuries of contact with Arab traders the Yao suddenly and massively converted to their allies’ religion.9 The first to convert were several highly placed Yao chiefs – those who hosted at their houses the Arab visitors, who had ventured inland since 1810 to trade (Bone 2000: 13, Phiri 1988: 22). After these chiefs adopted the Islamic religion, the other Yao were quick to follow. One assumed reason for these voluntary conversions is the economic advantage of strengthening the ties and being associated with the prestigious, well-to-do trading partners (Sicard 2000: 297). The Islamic cosmology could, furthermore, be easily integrated into traditional Yao beliefs and customs, as both systems recognize one supreme being and observe transitory rituals such as those at puberty, marriage, and death (Alpers 2000 [1972], Bone 2000, Sicard 2000). As long as Allah’s power was accepted as absolute, Islamic doctrine tolerated new adherents’ belief in other mystical forces, such as the Yao worship of ancestral spirits (Alpers 2000 [1972]: 29). However, for over two centuries of contact with Islamic trading partners these considerations had not prompted any Yao to adopt the foreign religion. Alpers (2000 [1972]: 43-50) argues that the specific timing of mass conversion – towards the end of the 19th century – is likely to be related to the advent of the British colonialists. This stirred political unrest, creating opportunities to seize power. Some chiefs employed the new form of more-or-less direct contact with the supreme being to legitimize their authority over other chiefs.

By 1921, a British census reports that “every Yao village has a mosque” (Sicard 2000: 297). It is added, however, that generally, the Yao were “not very strict Mohammedans, only using the mosque during the Fast of Ramadan” (ibid). Elsewhere on the African continent conversion to Islam often meant adopting an ideology of female domesticity, and thus tends to be associated with negative empowerment indicators for women (Njoh & Akiwumi 2011). This seems not to have been the case among the Yao Muslims, who only adopted symbolic elements of Islam that did not clash with their own customs (Bone 2000: 18, Pike 1968: 69, Rangeley 1963: 25, Sicard 2000: 297). Traditional initiation rites, for example, have been renamed after Islamic initiation rites, but the content remained largely unaltered (Msiska 1995: 70). Boys’ circumcision had been customary among the

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9 Compared to the European expeditions and the spread of Christianity, little is known about the history of Arabs and spread of Islam in Southern Africa (Bone 2000: 7, Phiri 2004: 194). Although Arab trading caravans always travelled with a secretary (Sicard 2000: 296) – someone who mastered the art of writing and must have kept records – historians have predominantly relied on the writings of the British explorers and missionaries. This one-sided reconstruction of history corresponds with Eric Wolf’s observation, described in his book *Europe and the people without history* (1982), that the analyses of global history often have a strong Eurocentric inclination.
Yao long before they came in contact with Arabs (Rangeley 1963: 18), and continues to be performed. Girls’ clitoridectomy was practiced among the Yao for a brief period after conversion to Islam, but ceased when it led to many deaths (Tew 1950: 20). Although the Qur’an prescribes 40 days of post-partum abstinence, the Yao continue to practice this for an average of six months (GoM 2011a: 84, Zulu 2001: 475). According to Rangeley (1963: 25), who speaks of a “thin layer of [Islamic] veneer … plastered on the normal matrilineal custom of the tribe”, the only radical alterations that resulted from the adoption of Islam are an abhorrence of pigs and the necessity to cut the throat of any warm-blooded animal before it can be eaten. Pig meat is indeed not consumed by Mudzi villagers, although a few women (some of them Muslim) breed pigs for sale after a development organization had initiated this for them – their ‘abhorrence’ was thus not insurmountable. Mice are also not eaten by the Mudzi Muslims because of their religion. Alcohol consumption does not seem to be a taboo. The mosque is fairly well attended on Friday afternoons, during which time some women wear a headscarf. Fasting during Ramadan is practiced by all adult Mudzi Muslims, which one of them said to be a good preparation for the upcoming hunger season.

After David Livingstone, the first European explorer of the area, reached Lake Malawi in 1859, he was soon followed by Christian missionaries from various denominations. On the eve of colonization one of these first missionaries living in southern Malawi noted that the status of women “was in no way inferior to that of the man. … Frequently … the position of the woman seemed superior to that of the man” (Rowley 1867: 208, cited in Mandala 1984: 143). Apparently, at this stage in history the esteemed position of women in matrilineal Malawi had not been severely affected by potentially undermining forces from within or outside their communities.

Colonial era: 1891 – 1963

The first European missionaries in Malawi were quickly joined by white settlers looking for fertile lands, export crops, and easy money (Davison 1997: 99). When Portuguese military expeditions started to venture into the area from the African east coast, the British decided to formally claim the territory as their Protectorate in 1891 (Mitchell 1956: 28), stating that they were asked to do so by missionaries who were attacked by hostile slave traders (Davison 1997: 98). The British called their territory Nyasaland, after the Yao word for ‘lake’. The official and explicit policy of the Protectorate was to stamp out slavery, in which the Brits were quick to succeed. Domestic slavery and trading slaves to the coast was prohibited, and fined by surrendering of guns (Mitchell 1956: 39). The various Yao chiefs, who

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10 Whites in Malawi thus are not associated with their role in expanding and professionalizing the slave trade, but rather with rescuing the Malawian population from it.
had started raiding each other to meet the increasing demand for slaves (Pike 1968: 60), did not unite against their common enemy. They were gradually disarmed and within a few years of violent clashes had to acknowledge the British military superiority (Mitchell 1956: 38).

The European invasion altered gender relations especially in the matrilineal groups of Malawi (Davison 1997: 96, Hirschmann & Vaughan 1984: 2-3). Many of those who sought protection at the mission posts against slave raids eventually adopted the white man’s religion and related patriarchal notions (Bennesch 2011, Phiri 1983). The missionaries generally believed no good could come from the matrilineal customs they encountered, and actively attempted to eradicate these (Bennesch 2011: 40). In a review of these missionaries’ impacts, Bennesch (2011) lists that men were granted land ownership and wives were encouraged to join their husbands on his land. Initiation rites instructing on traditional norms and values were replaced by Christian-oriented ceremonies, during which men were no longer tutored to respect women while women were still told to obey men. Overall, conjugal unions (with male household heads) were lauded at the expense of lineage bonds. Where possible, female chiefs were dethroned, and newly appointed chiefs were invariably male. Bennesch (2011) concludes that the adoption of Christian ideologies and practices severely corroded women’s once strong social position (see also Phiri 1983). Nevertheless, in many parts of Malawi, matrilineal and matrilocal organizing structures continue to exist side by side with Christian doctrine (e.g. Benson 2002: 63, Peters 1997b, Morris 1998: 44)

Meanwhile, the abolition of slavery put an end to what was a highly lucrative business for Yao communities. They lost their weapons, their wealth, and the slaves that cultivated their fields and carried out household chores. Yao men lost the source of their increasing economic and marital independence. Not surprisingly, animosity towards the colonialists was deeper among the Yao than among other groups. When the British began to offer (Christian) education, the (by then Islamic) Yao refused to participate, which later led them to be sidelined in the white-collar wage-earning sector (Bone 2000: 20, Lwanda 2004: 31, Njoh & Akiwumi 2011: 5). Until this day the Yao within Malawi have a reputation for not caring about education, instead preferring to marry off their children early (pers. obs.) [also P3 0238, 2344, 3870].

Not only the slave trade withered. As manufactured products penetrated rural markets, so too did the local pottery, salt, cloth, and iron industries which had involved both men and women producers and traders (Mandala 1982: 30). Local economies were increasingly trimmed down to mere subsistence farming.

Meanwhile, in an attempt to create a productive labour force out of the ‘natives’, the colonial regime introduced money and demanded each household to pay a ‘hut tax’ (Phiri 1983: 270). Commonly, the patriarchal presumptions and ideologies of missionaries and colonial administrators are assumed to have
instigated a shift in the gendered power balance by privileging men’s access to education and waged employment (e.g. Davison 1997: 95, Morris 1998: 44, Saidi 2010: 92). Indeed, on the emergent estates within Nyasaland and industries in South Africa and Rhodesia, and in the colonial military exclusively men were recruited (Davison 1993, Hirschmann & Vaughan 1984, Mandala 1982). Women, perceived by Western employers as destined for child caring and housekeeping, were almost entirely excluded from the colonial and post-colonial wage economy (Bryceson et al. 2004: 11, Kaler 2006: 339). In some cases, unmarried women were even prohibited from migrating to labour centres, in an attempt by the colonial administration to avoid loose morals and prostitution (Davison 1997: 126, 133, White 1990: 4). Nevertheless, it would be incomplete to only assess the impact of Western androcentric capitalism here, and inaccurate to assume that this actually triggered a ‘turn-around’ of gender power relations. The fact that mainly men went to work for money fits in neatly with the traditional gendered labour division. While women concerned themselves with the vital task of food production, men had always ventured out to cover extra household needs. Most likely, it was locally considered merely logical that generating money for tax became a male task (Tew 1950: 13).

Payments were slightly better in labour centres abroad (Davison 1997: 109), and many men left their homes and families to seek employment there. By 1956 as much as one-third of the adult male population of Nyasaland was employed outside their home country (Mitchell 1961: 77), and in some localities the level of male absence reached 75 percent (Coleman 1974: 87). As most ethnic groups had long histories of men leaving their homes and families for extended periods of time – to join trading, hunting, or raiding expeditions (Alpers 1975: 18, Morris 1998: 26) – taking up temporary labour contracts abroad was not out of the ordinary. Abdallah (1973 [1919]: 28-9) writes that in the pre-colonial era Yao men who had participated in the trading caravans to the coast were highly regarded within their community for having seen other places and for being adventurous and courageous, while those who had never left their home area were ridiculed for not being a real man. The same prestige now lured those crossing national borders to find wage employment (Chirwa 1997: 7, Kaler 2003: 360). Men from matrilineal groups in particular had much to gain and little to lose from migrating to find wage labour. They owned no land or other property that they could lose entitlement to during their absence. Describing the situation of young men in 1940, Audrey Richards wrote: “Nowadays they often use the opportunity of wage-labour for Europeans as a means of escape from the domination of the wife’s people” (1969 [1940]: 38).

11 Particularly young men were recruited, altering not only gender relations, but also relations between generations (Mandala 1982).
Labour migration offered Yao young men a new means to attain status and achieve relative independence.

During the colonial era scholars (e.g. Richards 1939: 23) and administrators believed that the outflow of able-bodied young men would have disastrous impacts on food security as the main source of labour disappeared, leaving ‘the weak’ – women and the elderly – to do all the rural work (also in Minton 2008: 32-3, Phiri 1983: 271-2). Coleman (1974) however argues that this seemed not to be the case. Women had always formed an important part of the agricultural labour force (see also Alpers 1975: 12, 16, Morris 1998: 26), so that the drain of young men actually made little difference. Furthermore, few children went to school, and they may have helped on the fields too. Specific male tasks like building or repairing houses and granaries only needed to be carried out occasionally, and, as most men returned every two years, these tasks were not necessarily affected by the temporary absences. Some scholars argue, furthermore, that the absence of men and the remittances they sent benefitted women’s autonomy (Cohen & Atieno-Odhiambo 1989, Harries 1994, Mayer 1980).

Ever since money had been introduced in 1893, the need and desire for it intensified. It was not only needed to pay hut tax, and to acquire new consumer goods like paraffin, matches, and sugar, but also, increasingly, to supplement declining yields. The yields declined because both the quantity and quality of land available to the local population diminished (for reasons discussed in the following section Food Insecurity). As land size, soil fertility, and yields decreased, so did women’s productive autonomy and relative position of power (Berheide & Segal 1994, Davison 1993: 406, Hirschmann & Vaughan 1984, Vaughan 1987: 128). Food security increasingly depended on the ability to purchase fertilizer and supplementary food, which intensified households’ reliance on men’s income for financial support.

Matrilineal women’s control over fields and food is often argued to have further declined due to the patriarchal presumptions of missionaries, commercial settlers, and colonial officials (e.g. Davison 1997: 101, 134, Mayoux 2002: 14, Potash 1995, Phiri 1983: 268-9, White 1987). These either assumed that men were households, or felt they should be. Therefore, when allocating land to locals they tended to grant it all to men – irrespective of traditional ownership and inheritance.

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12 For several decades a thriving export of Malawian cotton assured female farmers financial independence, but during the global economic depression of the 1930s revenues dropped to a bare minimum. Colonial officers lamented the plight of the many unmarried women farmers, whose diligence had impressed them earlier, and planned to temporarily exempt these women from paying taxes. Local male authorities objected, however, claiming it unjust to reward women for remaining unmarried and arguing that it would further encourage female looseness. They arranged that instead the colonial administration taxed each man for only one hut, no matter how many wives (and thus huts) he had – so pushing the previously independent women farmers into (polygynous) marriage (Mandala 1982: 37).
regulations (e.g. Moore & Vaughan 1987: 530-4). As discussed, however, the Yao, due to their Islamic orientation and larger aversion towards the colonial regime, are likely to have been less involved with patriarchal Westerners and may therefore have been less affected by this than most other groups in Malawi.

In sum, men’s control over material resources increased while that of women diminished. Men’s privileged access to education and wage labour gave them a virtual monopoly on cash, on which women increasingly depended. As a result, men’s independence from and authority over women is generally said to have increased13 (Davison 1993, Hirschmann & Vaughan 1984, Mandala 1982, Semu 2002). In 1962, Mitchell wrote that through marriage Yao women acquired the “right to support” (Mitchell 1962: 37). This could suggest that that by the end of the colonial era, Yao women’s position had declined from being equal to and relatively autonomous from men, to needing (entitlement to) support. But Mitchell’s comment can also be read to indicate that women, through marriage, found a way to harness men’s access to money. Based on my empirical data from Mudzi, which will be discussed in the following chapters, I believe it is these two readings combined that seems to reflect most accurately women’s current-day agency within a resource-limited environment.

Post-colonial era: 1963 – 2012

As profits failed to materialize, Britain’s overseas territories came to be seen as a drain of money and were thus ordered to cover their own costs. Supporting issues related to education, health, and agriculture was left to missionaries, and economic development to commercial plantation owners (Pike 1968: 95). Taxes were raised even when the country faced famine (Conroy 2006: 15). While the Nyasaland population felt increasingly exploited and discriminated against, the British felt increasingly uncomfortable with their colonies. Eventually, the British parliament planned to rid itself from its colonial responsibilities by handing over the country to the European estate owners who had settled on Nyasaland’s most fertile grounds (Pike 1968: 108).

However, due to missionary support the group of Nyasaland men with Western training had grown substantially by the mid-20th century. This group objected strongly to the British plans, foreseeing an apartheid regime like those in South Africa and Southern Rhodesia (Pike 1968: 110-4). As elsewhere in the African

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13 Interestingly, Silberschmidt (2004) and Nguthi (2007) argue that the reverse happened in some patrilineal societies. They found that in rural Kenya, men’s labor wages are often insufficient to maintain a family, which forces women to find their own means of generating an income. Unable to live up to their responsibility as breadwinner, men lose (self)respect. Although men own the land, women cultivate it. Managing both food and cash crops, women have become crucial for the survival of the household. As a result the power balance between men and women has shifted towards the latter.
colonies, demands for independence gained strength. Initially, protesters were killed or imprisoned, but this only stirred the disapproval of colonization on the British mainland. When in 1959 a handful of young locals were permitted to sit in the Nyasaland parliament – a decision that the colonial administration hoped would soothe the escalating situation and silence the opposition – these men instead grabbed every opportunity to publicly question and criticize the racist colonial regime (Pike 1968: 136). There was no way back and Britain eventually agreed to gradually release their grip on Nyasaland, which culminated in full independence in 1964.14

Most Nyasaland nationals involved in the independence movement were youngsters. They needed a leader that radiated authority, and asked the senior Dr. Hastings Kamuzu Banda to be their representative and symbolic father figure, a role which the youngsters intended to be largely ceremonial (Pike 1968: 139). Running his own medical practice in London15 – a position unequalled by any other Nyasaland national – Banda was a highly esteemed local hero and therefore perfectly suited for the job. He accepted, but only on the condition of a life-long chairmanship.

Soon after being installed as president, Banda made sure his most outspoken collaborators within the movement were removed from the political scene and even expelled from the country (Pike 1968: 168). Banda renamed the country after the pre-colonial Maravi empire, established himself as supreme chief, and founded a repressive one-party political system that lasted for 30 years. Not much changed for the rural masses: Banda privileged the small, local, Western-oriented upper class, much like the British had advantaged the whites (Lwanda 2004: 32). He imposed his own mother tongue ChiChewa as the national language (since taught at all primary schools), together with English (the lingua franca at all higher levels of education and the national newspapers).

Banda reigned like a traditional chief. Surrounding himself with symbols customarily associated with chiefs and radiating the autocratic authority assigned

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14 Between the 1950s and 1970s virtually all colonies in Africa went through similar decolonization processes.

15 As a youngster, Banda allegedly walked from Nyasaland to South Africa, longing for further education. Working in the mines during the daytime and studying in the evening hours, he eventually managed to obtain an education in the United States where he studied philosophy and medicine. To be able to work as a medical doctor in his home country, as he wished, he had to obtain a British medical degree and therefore continued his studies in Scotland. World War II prevented him from obtaining the necessary permits, and to kill time he opened a – successful – medical practice in one of London’s suburbs. Having personally experienced the racism in South Africa and the southern US, he strongly objected to Britain’s plan to hand over Nyasaland to the European estate owners in the country (Pike 1968: 108). From England, Banda became increasingly involved in the struggle for independence both morally and financially, mediating between the nationalists and the colonial office in London. When he returned to his home country to be installed as leader of the national party, he had not been there for 45 years (Wolf & Pendergast nd).
to the paramount chief, he became quickly recognized and accepted as such throughout Malawi (Pike 1968: 170). In his hands he had a country lacking mineral resources, capital, skilled labour, industries, and domestic markets of any significance. Banda decided to focus on developing an agricultural export-oriented economy, in which the Malawian masses would generate income by working on large modern estates (Blackie & Conroy 2006: 93). To create such estates many villagers were forced to abandon their home and gardens and move elsewhere. A former Malawian colleague of mine was one of these villagers. When I asked him about the issue, he answered that Banda had given no compensation and the villagers had not protested. Moreover, he seemed to feel that Banda had had no reason to compensate, nor had he and his family had any reason to protest, because, he explained, Banda was the owner of Malawi, and could possess all lands as he wished. Apparently, the people of Malawi generally granted their president the same rights and power as they had to their traditional paramount chiefs. Banda’s authority was based both on hegemonic consensus and approval (Chirambo 2004: 147, Forster 1994), and excessive violent repression.

During his many speeches Banda openly threatened to make crocodile meat of anyone daring to counter him — a comment which made it to the Guinness book of records as the most inhuman and dangerous statement made by a state president (Mkamanga 2000: 101).

Banda imposed upon the arbitrarily unified people of Malawi an invented but supposedly shared ideology with a strong normative gender component. It was based on his personal matrilineal background, but interlarded with patriarchal Western and Christian gender norms that reflected his 28 years in the US and England (Segal 2008). Women were explicitly granted a central position in his pursuit for modernization, but particularly as supporters and facilitators of husbands who were to do the real work. Women were glorified as embodiments of the traditional African ways, while men, like himself, represented Western progress (Gilman 2009: 65-6). During his 30-year reign, Banda continuously asserted that Malawian women had been oppressed and pitiable before he came to their rescue16 (Gilman 2004: 39-40). In practice, this ‘rescue’ existed mainly of educating women in typically Western housewives’ chores such as cooking, sewing, hygiene, and house decoration (Semu 2002: 84). Hence, while rhetorically claiming to empower women, Banda actually confined their role to the private sphere. Largely rural and uneducated, the Malawian masses were susceptible to Banda’s dictatorial

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16 In 1958 for example, Banda stated that: “Women were trampled down by everybody ... everybody. ... Nobody thought about women except to make them cook for them. That’s all. ... So, I made up my mind even before I came that I was going to do something about my women. Therefore when I see my women happy and singing and dancing with their heads high, their necks bent with pride like that ... it makes me happy, very happy.” (in Gilman 2004: 39-40).
manipulation of culture and history (Forster 1994, Semu 2002: 80), and it is likely that the impact of his ideology is still discernible in people’s minds. Banda’s persuasive and long-lasting influence on gender ideology is missed by many other historical accounts on changing gender relations in Malawi (e.g. Bennesch 2011, Davison 1993, Hirschmann & Vaughan 1984, Phiri 1983). It was pointed out to me by Mudzi’s Group Village Headwoman (aged 61), who remarked that ever since Banda’s reign, women can no longer tell their husbands how to behave [P3 2542].

Despite the apparent violations of human rights, Banda was generally treated favourably by Western governments because of his strong anti-communist stance. When the Cold War ended in the 1990s, however, the West had no reason to ignore Malawi’s horrific human rights record any longer (Conroy 2006: 20). With backing from the international community and missionaries within Malawi, national protests increased. In 1993 Banda succumbed to allowing a referendum, in which Malawians – much to Banda’s surprise – opted for a multi-party democratic system. The country has since been prone to discord among the various political parties.17

During and after Banda’s reign, Western development programs too have unwittingly undermined women’s position in Malawi, as they have elsewhere in Africa. Based on Western household models and gender stereotypes, productive interventions were, and often still are, directed at men as the presumed household heads and main food producers (Boserup 1970, Baerends 1994, Doss 1999, Ferguson 1994, Quisumbing & Meinzen-Dick 2001, Rogers 1980). Men received information on new agricultural technologies and the tools to apply these, while women – responsible for most farming activities but considered mere housewives – were excluded. Besides this material privileging of men at the expense of women, the tendency of development agencies to see and treat African women as subordinate to men and in need of empowerment may have further degraded the female (self-)image (Arnfred 2004a: 12). As we shall see in Chapter 8, however,

17 As an update to the most recent political situation: The president who reigned in Malawi during the fieldwork for this study, Bingu wa Mutharika, was appreciated by the international donor community for his anti-corruption policies and his efforts to address other issues high on international development agendas. Indeed, many development indicators have improved under his presidency (2004-2012). The share of the population living in poverty declined; infant, child and maternal mortality decreased; and literacy and gender parity in education increased (GoM 2010a: xi). Unfortunately, since 2008, the impacts of the global economic crisis became felt in Malawi too, driving up prices and unemployment. As popular discontent proliferated, Mutharika became repressive. This eventually led to violent clashes between protesters and the national police, and to major international donors suspending their financial aid to the country. In April 2012, Mutharika died abruptly of a heart attack. After some turmoil, he was succeeded by vice-president Joyce Banda – whom he had earlier expelled from his party as she had refused to accept the nomination of his brother as his future successor. Joyce Banda is Malawi’s first and Africa’s second female president. Soon after installation she sold the private jet and the fleet of 60 Mercedes cars that came with the job, a deed considered “iconic for an African leader” (UK Secretary for International Development Andrew Mitchell, quoted in the UK Telegraph June 1, 2012). Relations with the international donor community were soon restored.
the actual effect (positive or negative) of external development aid on community levels seems quite minimal – at least for the case of Mudzi.

Besides the various advances of men’s position vis-à-vis women, it should also be mentioned that meanwhile, some of the arguably most masculine traditional tasks have become decimated or annihilated due to external circumstances. Conquering new fields from nature is no longer necessary as almost all land has been cleared (Mandala 1982: 30), hunting for large mammals is impossible as the few that are left reside in protected wildlife reserves, raiding for slaves has been prohibited since the colonial era, and adventurous long-distance trading journeys ceased as a result. While the tasks through which women can confirm their gender identity continue to be diverse – cultivating fields, preparing food, bearing and caring for children, and housekeeping – those for men can have increasingly narrowed down to the provision of money.

It appears, in conclusion, that men’s contemporary role as provider was not produced by colonialist and capitalist influences, as assumed by many gender analysts, but is rather a continuation of far older local norms and customs. Nonetheless, a number of factors, which partly result from colonialism and capitalism, have over time led to a concentration on monetary provision as the measurement of a man’s worth.

In recent years, however, monetary provision has become increasingly difficult to achieve. The international economic crisis (beginning in 2007) is being felt severely in Malawi, as both prices and unemployment rise. Even prior to the global crisis, Malawian men’s access to relatively well-paid jobs in the better endowed countries of Southern Africa has declined drastically – due to technical improvements that reduced the demand for manual labour, the Zimbabwean economic collapse, the decision of the South African government to deport all Malawians (arguing that they brought HIV into the country18), and the recent violent outbursts against migrants in South Africa. Nevertheless, during my fieldwork period male labour migration to South Africa remained an important, albeit less profitable and less easy, source of income for many households in Mudzi.

Food insecurity

The colonial government allowed in their towns only locals who worked there. To avoid having poor, unemployed, urban masses who might demand social support from their government, the colonial administration deemed it better for all if migrants returned to their rural place of origin as soon as they became unemployed. Permanent urban settlement was thus strongly opposed (Mitchell 1961: 84). Banda

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18 Lwanda (2004: 38-9) argues however that it is more likely that Malawians brought HIV into Malawi after having worked in South Africa. See the next session for further elaboration.
too forced much of the Malawian population to remain in their villages as subsistence farmers, arguing that “cities breed poverty”, and presumably hoping to prevent the organization of political opposition. As a result, Malawi is one of the least urbanized countries worldwide, with almost 80 percent of the population residing in rural areas (GoM 2011b: 25). Not surprisingly then, Malawi has a predominantly agricultural economy. About 90 percent of the Malawian households grow crops (GoM 2006a); 80 percent of the population are small-scale subsistence farmers (GoM 2005a), thus depending largely on their own agricultural produce to survive.

Compared to some other countries in the region, Malawi’s agricultural production levels are extremely low. The value of net agricultural output per hectare in Malawi is on average only one-fifth of that achieved in Tanzania, Uganda, and Kenya, with the gap worsening for lower-income households (Ellis & Freeman 2005). While East African farmers can harvest their fields twice per year because of two rainy seasons, Malawi has rains only once a year. Expansive growth of the Malawian population increased the need for land to cultivate as well as fuel wood to cook with, which has led to extreme deforestation and degradation of soils. Global climate change, furthermore, has increased the incidence of drought as well as flooding, severely affecting yields throughout the country.

But ecological factors only partly explain Malawi’s low agricultural productivity. Both the British and Banda’s regime have to some extent purposefully neglected developing the rural areas (Conroy 2006: 17-8, Ellis et al. 2003: 33), prioritizing the development of a small elite instead. Estate agriculture was rapidly expanded at the expense of smallholder agriculture through easy acquisition of land, and smallholder agriculture was taxed to develop the estates (Chirwa et al. 2008: 5). Furthermore, smallholders were prohibited from growing certain cash crops so that estate owners could monopolize them (Conroy 2006: 18, Frankenberger et al. 2003: 2). To the elite a hungry peasantry had its advantages, as it facilitated the recruitment of cheap labour on commercial estates (Mandala 2005). Uneducated, isolated, and preoccupied with day-to-day survival, the rural masses were, furthermore, less likely to oppose the abusive regimes. The legacy of this neglect is a rural population that, in comparison to surrounding countries, is markedly deprived of infrastructural, educational, agricultural, and health services (Bryceson & Fonseca 2006). The most fertile lands have been granted to the commercial estates where export crops are grown, occupying over 40 percent of all arable land in Malawi (Arrehag et al. 2006: 65, Sahley et al. 2005: 13). Smallholder farming households have a median land size of 0.6 hectares to cultivate (Chinsinga 2008: 8) – which is far below the estimated 1.5 hectares needed to feed a family for a full year (Kamwendo 2006: 5). If the crops are not affected by dry spells, floods, or pests, an average Malawian household can harvest just enough to feed itself for six to seven months (Chirwa et al. 2008: 15). Buying sufficient food in the remaining months is difficult for many as income-generating opportunities are
limited and prices are high at this time due to scarcity and huge demand – leading to an annually recurring ‘hunger season’.

Although reduced land availability due to population pressure is usually mentioned as a reason for the small plot sizes, dependence on manual labour too plays a restraining role (Madzonga, pers. comm., Hyden 1980: 152, Moore & Vaughan 1987: 538, Phiri 1983: 263). As few Malawian smallholder farmers own animal draft power – let alone mechanized power – cultivation is mainly dependent on human labour. During the exhausting heat that precedes the rainy season, the fields must be cleared and ploughed using a handheld hoe. Sowing, weeding, and harvesting are all done manually as well. Having depleted the stores of their previous harvest before the next harvest is due, many villagers survive by doing ganyu: in exchange for some money or food they work on the fields of wealthier farmers, which are usually those who receive remittances from husbands or relatives working in town or in South Africa.

Malawi’s main food crop is maize, grown by 97 percent of the farmers (GoM 2005a), and contributing to 80 percent of daily calorie intake for most Malawians (Blackie & Conroy 2006: 87). It is primarily used for making nsima, a thick porridge that is the basis of the Malawian diet, usually accompanied by a small side dish to dip into the nsima. For these side dishes, seasonal vegetables or legumes are generally used, such as pumpkin leaves, beans, or okra. When the budget allows, tiny dried fish may be bought to accompany the nsima; meat is a luxury that is rarely eaten. Malawians commonly say that without some heavy nsima in their stomach, they feel they have not properly eaten. Maize is not indigenous to the region, but was imported from the Americas by the Portuguese in the 17th century and quickly adopted because of several advantages over local crops like sorghum and millet: higher yields, quicker maturing, better taste, and grains that are protected from birds by sheaths (Carr 2004, McCann 2001). To make most of the little land available to them, farmers grow maize on it almost exclusively. This monocropping has led to the depletion of soil nutrients, and the one-sided diet to the severe malnourishment of the rural population. Agricultural research institutes have developed higher yielding maize varieties, but most smallholder farmers continue to rely on local varieties, because hybrid maize needs costly fertilizer input, is more prone to pests, and cannot be used for replanting the following season.21

Besides a general lack of capital to invest in cattle, the long dry season in Southern Africa makes the region less suitable for big livestock, which need year-round grasslands to graze, compared to Eastern Africa with its two annual rainy seasons (Blackie & Conroy 2006: 101).

Malawi has one of the highest prevalence of protein-energy undernutrition in the world. Furthermore, iron, zinc, vitamin A, and iodine deficiencies are high (Maleta 2006)

“Farming”, a Malawian colleague once said to me, “is actually for rich people: only those who can afford improved seeds, fertilizer, and ganyu labourers can benefit.
The colonial presence had a drastic impact on traditional farming practices. Following the halting of intertribal wars and slave raids, and the availability of Western medicine the local population increased to such an extent that fallow periods had to be shortened. As a result productivity diminished. Before peasants could adequately adapt to this new situation, however, the colonial regime intervened aggressively. They set out to change local agricultural practices by force, penalizing peasants who did not take up the new, more labour-intensive methods (Davison 1997: 106, Pike 1968: 159). Believing they must always respect the ways of their ancestors to assure survival in their highly precarious environment, farmers were averse to the new practices forced onto them by the foreigners. At independence, Malawians widely hoped they could return to their traditional cultivation practices, and were upset when Banda continued to push for agricultural reform (Pike 1968: 162).

Seasonality is key to understanding the daily lives of smallholder farmers in Malawi (see Figure 2.1 for a timeline). Just like each year brings a season of hunger, so too it brings a season of plenty. After harvesting, villagers eat big plates of *nsima* several times a day, and regularly sell some of their maize to buy ‘luxury’ products like meat, oil, tea, sugar, or clothes. At other times of the year, their diet almost exclusively exists of what the land has to offer at that specific time, be it mangoes, pumpkin leaves, or cassava. Whenever a farmer has any crop in abundance and can sell some surplus, prices hit bottom, because all farmers in the area have plenty of that same crop at that same time. Food prices thus also fluctuate throughout the year: low just after harvest and high during the hunger season. Daily activities too depend on the season. Before the rainy season commences the fields have to be cleared from weeds and ploughed. When the first rains fall the seeds must be planted. Later weeds must be removed and – if available – fertilizer applied. After harvest the maize kernels are ripped off the cobs and stored. Ceremonies such as initiation rites or tombstone revealings often take place soon after harvest, when the food required for such celebrations is readily available.

Figure 2.1: Timeline of the agricultural seasons in Malawi
Source: USAID/FEWS NET 2012

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22 Some trading is done between regions, as ecologies and timing of the rainy season differ, and therefore also the availability of crops. However, transport costs are an impeding factor.

23 Deceased persons are usually buried soon after death, either the same day or the next. The grave remains without a tombstone until the family manages to gather enough money for it – which may never happen at all. But if it happens, the placing of the stone is accompanied by a lavish celebration.
Approximately one-third of Malawi’s smallholders cultivate cash crops in addition to food crops (Conroy 2006a: 24). Malawi’s main export crop is tobacco, grown by several large estates as well as many small-scale farmers\(^{24}\) – but sales continue to steadily diminish due to the global decline in smoking. Other export crops include tea, sugar, cotton, coffee, and groundnuts. Contrary to free-market-proponents’ belief, smallholder cash-crop growers in Malawi are not in the position to negotiate reasonable minimum prices for their produce. In dire need for some money to buy the next meal they simply have to accept whatever price is offered to them (pers. obs., Bryceson & Fonseca 2005). Without direct access to the sea, transportation costs for export are relatively high, making it difficult to compete with other countries, further squeezing the prices offered by traders to the absolute minimum. The domestic market to sell produce and products is small because of the low level of urbanization, the small number of people living above the poverty line, and the negligible size of the tourist industry.\(^{25}\)

Over the past century, it must be noted, Malawi’s smallholder agricultural sector has not been fully self-sustaining. As mentioned, large numbers of men migrated to better-endowed countries in the region in search for work, sending some of their earnings to their families in Malawi (Bryceson et al. 2004: 11-2). Vaughan (1987) describes how these remittances kept many from starvation during the severe famine of 1949. Besides being used to buy supplemental food, money remains particularly needed to purchase agricultural inputs like chemical fertilizer and pesticides. At a large scale it is also used to hire extra labour to meet the need for manual labour power. As mentioned, however, income opportunities, both abroad and within Malawi, have declined over the past decades.

The governments that succeeded Banda’s regime made some efforts to reduce rural food insecurity by investing in education, irrigation, roads, communication, and market infrastructure. But international donors have long considered investing in agricultural development outdated (Conroy & Blackie 2006: 6). Instead, they urged that government expenses – which were to be minimized in the first place to pay off foreign debts – should focus on market liberalization and commercial export (Sahley et al. 2005). Only recently did the international aid community revalue agricultural development as vital for poverty reduction in low-income countries like Malawi (the World Bank’s 2008 World Development Report titled *Agriculture for Development* exemplifies this paradigm shift).

Resulting from the combination of factors described in this section, the majority of Malawians suffer from chronic food insecurity and malnutrition (see Chapter

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\(^{24}\) Since 1990 Banda allowed also smallholder farmers to grow this cash crop, under pressure from the World Bank (Blackie & Conroy 2006: 95).

\(^{25}\) As a comparison, Carr (2004: 16) describes a thriving market for high-value horticulture in Kenya due to the large urban population of several million topped up by the million tourists that visit annually. For South Africa these numbers are even higher.
1). Hunger, it must be emphasized, is not simply one of many forms of poverty. It is the deepest, most basic form of poverty. Not having sufficient food also means not having anything else, as most other items will have been exchanged for food. Surplus for investment in agricultural, educational, or any other kind of development is structurally lacking at the household level because food remains the main concern. For almost two decades now, malnutrition levels have remained virtually unchanged in Malawi (Field 2009), with detrimental impacts on the mental and physical development of individuals (Maleta 2006: 18-20), and consequently on the development of the entire nation. The recurring hunger seasons that rural Malawians have to deal with each year are not the exceptional famines that reach our television screens and trigger big fundraising events. Instead they remain unnoticed and disregarded by most of the world’s population.

HIV and AIDS

History and statistics

HIV is generally assumed to have originated in west-central African chimpanzees and transferred to human beings in the early 20th century (Worobey et al. 2008). When US scientists first identified AIDS and HIV in the early 1980s, the virus must already have been rampant in southern Africa. In 1986 the first HIV tests were carried out in Malawi, and almost half of the tested urban sex workers were found positive (Chiphangwi et al. 1987). As with other issues troubling his nation (such as food shortages – Mandala 2005: 23), Banda enforced silence and denial by prohibiting medics from keeping records of the disease and journalists from reporting on it (Lwanda 2004: 35). By the end of his regime, HIV prevalence among urban sex workers had increased to 70 percent (UNAIDS/WHO 2004). It was estimated that over the same ten-year period infection rates among the general population rose explosively, from 2 to 33 percent (Geubbels & Bowie 2006: 31). This estimation was based on HIV prevalence among pregnant women attending urban antenatal clinics, as these were assumed to roughly represent the general population. When it was later realized that there were substantial differences between urban and rural infection rates and between prevalence among men and women, calculation methods and national estimates were revised (GoM 2008a).

Currently, it is estimated that in Malawi 11 percent of the population between 15 and 49 is HIV positive (GoM 2011a) – the majority unaware of their status. This number has remained stable over the past decade, partly because the spread of the

26 Not only Malawians face an annual hunger season, rural populations of the other countries in Southern Africa do too (Lambrechts & Barry 2003).
27 This percentage does not include the estimated 20,000 babies that are born with HIV annually (Whiteside & Conroy 2006: 76).
virus has slowed down in the urban areas, but also as a result of increased death rates (Conroy & Whiteside 2006: 50) prior to the introduction of antiretroviral treatment. As elsewhere in sub-Saharan Africa, AIDS started out as mainly striking urban, educated men – those who travelled and could afford extramarital relationships. Infection rates have remained highest in the urban areas, while the spread of HIV accelerates in the rural areas (GoM 2006b, UNAIDS 2008). Urban HIV prevalence is currently estimated at 17 percent, and rural prevalence at 9 percent (GoM 2011a). In absolute numbers, due to its low level of urbanization, Malawi has over twice as many rural infected as urban infected (GoM 20012: 2).

As is the case throughout sub-Saharan Africa, more women than men live with the virus (13% versus 8%). As a result of these disproportionate infection rates, women currently represent almost 60 percent of all infected Malawians (UNAIDS 2008). Throughout the continent women are especially overrepresented among the younger generations. The latest statistics from Malawi show that infection rates among women aged 15 to 39 are significantly higher than those among their male peers. Young women between the ages 15 to 19 are four times more likely to be infected than their male peers (4% versus 1%), and those aged 20 to 34 are infected roughly twice as often (14% versus 7%) (GoM 2011a: 196). Comparing the data with those from earlier national surveys, however, some hopeful signs can be discerned (see Figure 2.2). In the age group 20 to 34, HIV prevalence dropped for both men and women. Among women aged 20 to 24 and men aged 30 to 34, the rates even dropped by almost half (for women from 13% to 6%, for men from 20% to 11%). It appears that women currently in the age group 20 to 24 (born between 1986 and 1990) have been best able to reduce their risk of infection. Meanwhile, however, HIV prevalence continues to rise among the group of women that is currently aged 30 to 39 (born between 1971 and 1980).

Figure 2.2: HIV prevalence in age and sex groups
Source: GoM 2012: 2
For both men and women infection rates are highest among the wealthiest quintiles of the population, roughly double that of the lowest quintile (for men 11% versus 6%, for women 20% versus 9%). The level of education seems unrelated to men’s or women’s likeliness of being infected. Being employed does make a difference, for both men and women, but particularly for men: 2 percent of unemployed men are HIV infected, compared with 9 percent of employed men. Among women, 9 percent of the unemployed and 14 percent of the employed live with the virus (GoM 2011a: 198).

Ever since the monitoring of HIV prevalence started towards the end of Banda’s regime, infection rates have been substantially higher in the Southern Region (15%) than in the Central (8%) and Northern (7%) Region (GoM 2012: 13). A number of interrelated factors may help to explain the disproportionately high HIV rates in the Southern Region. Labour migration has been most substantial from this region (Bryceson et al. 2004: 27) and is found to be a major risk factor for HIV infection, as will be discussed in the following sub-section. This migratory pattern may in turn be related to higher levels of poverty and population density in the Southern Region, as well as the predominantly matrilineal organization of society, as argued earlier. The relatively high population density is a likely result of the comparatively fertile soils, which both attracted more Bantu settlers during pre-colonial periods and led to a concentration of commercial estates during the colonial period and beyond (Conroy 2006a: 16). These estates attracted labour migrants from the Northern and Central Regions, where the population size decreased as a result (Pike 1968: 24). A massive influx of refugees fleeing the Mozambican civil war further added to the population pressure in the south. The expansive population growth and expropriation of the best lands for commercial plantations (Sahley et al. 2005: 13) intensified food insecurity, which pushed men to search for alternative sources of livelihood security and thus into labour migration.

Drivers of the Malawian epidemic
In Malawi and the rest of sub-Saharan Africa HIV is predominantly transmitted through unprotected heterosexual intercourse, and to a far lesser extent from mother to baby (GoM 2012, UNAIDS 2008). It seems reasonable, therefore, to consider risky sex as central to the AIDS epidemics of sub-Saharan Africa (De Walque et al. 2012: 4). Here I describe the dynamics that are generally considered to underlie the (sexual) transmission of HIV in Malawi.

It is assumed that HIV first entered Malawi via migrants who worked abroad (Lwanda 2004: 35). In 1993 it was estimated that nearly half of the Malawian mine workers returning to their rural home areas from South Africa brought with them the deadly virus (Gould 1993 in Kalipeni et al. 2004: 60). The links between mobility and HIV transmission have been well documented (see Collins & Rau 2001: 8-12 for a review). Long-distance labour contracts often mean that workers
leave their families behind for extended periods of time. Their loneliness and cash to spend, combined with lower levels of social control than in their home villages, lead many migrant workers to engage in casual sexual encounters and to turn to commercial sex workers for their satisfaction (Ahlburg & Jensen 1998: 148, Chirwa 1997). Both these men and their sex partners often have multiple partners, enhancing the risk of HIV transmission. It has been convincingly argued that the particular colonial history of eastern and southern Africa\textsuperscript{28}, which generated an exceptionally extensive migrant labour system, played a decisive role in shaping the current geographical pattern of the continent’s AIDS pandemic (Hunt 1996: 1294-5, Yeboah 2007: 1136). Mobility continues to be an important risk factor for HIV infection in southern Africa in general, as well as Mudzi in particular, as here too labour migration is a common strategy for men to try improve their livelihood security.

Another factor increasingly pointed to as underlying the high levels of HIV transmission in sub-Saharan Africa is the high incidence of concurrent partnerships (Chirwa & Chizimbi 2009, GoM 2010b: 36, Epstein & Morris 2011, Nattrass 2009, Shelton et al. 2005, Uchudi et al. 2012). HIV is one of the least contagious viruses around. Under normal circumstances\textsuperscript{29} the probability of contracting HIV during unprotected sex with an infected partner is estimated to be as low as one in one thousand\textsuperscript{30} (Gray et al. 2001). In a context with high rates of untreated sexually transmitted infections (STIs), like rural Malawi, chances may increase to three in one thousand (Watkins 2004: 683). Only in the early and late stages of infection, when the viral load peaks, is the likelihood of transmission relatively high (Pilcher et al. 2004). Unprotected sex with a new partner soon after infection thus significantly increases the risk of HIV spreading. Simultaneous sexual partnerships increase the likeliness of this occurring. Reliable quantitative data on overlapping sexual relationships are difficult to obtain, as reporting bias tends to be high in surveys on respondents’ intimate sex lives (Clark 2010, Helleringer et al. 2011) – a topic generally considered inappropriate to openly discuss with strangers. Sexual concurrency may be particularly underreported by women, for whom it is socially disapproved of, and overstated by men, from whom sexual

\textsuperscript{28} Europeans settled in Eastern and Southern Africa rather than West Africa because of the relatively favourable climate. Valuable minerals, which were extracted with African labour, were found particularly in Southern Africa, leading to concentrations and flows of migrant workers in this region (Yeboah 2007: 1137).

\textsuperscript{29} ‘Normal’ here means heterosexual vaginal intercourse, in which the vagina is sufficiently lubricated, and the partners are free of genital ulcers. Anal intercourse, dry sex, and genital ulcers significantly increase probability of transmission.

\textsuperscript{30} This figure is based on studies in Europe, the US, Thailand, and Uganda among heterosexual couples of whom only one partner was HIV positive. The deliberate selection of such discordant couples may have biased the findings though, as the uninfected partner possibly escaped infection because of a partial immunity or selective resistance against HIV.
prowess is expected (Nnko et al. 2004). Of the few Malawian men and women who reported having had at least two sexual partners in the year prior to the national Demographic and Health Survey, 46 percent of women and 80 percent of men said the relationships had been overlapping (GoM 2011a: 178, 180). A unique study on sexual networking conducted among the rural population on an island in Lake Malawi revealed a large web in which half of all sexually active respondents were linked in one enormous network, and more than a quarter were connected through multiple chains of sexual relationships (Helleringer & Kohler 2007). Wealth inequalities are believed to play an important role in the establishment of such sexual networks, linking those with assets to those in need through the practice of transactional sex (Shelton et al. 2005: 1058).

As mentioned, only in sub-Saharan Africa are more women than men infected with HIV. While all women are biologically more susceptible to HIV infection than men (see Chapter 1), their predicament becomes particularly problematic when combined with severe gender inequality, as this inhibits them from negotiating the conditions under which sex occurs. For one, when a woman has to engage in sexual intercourse without being aroused, the risk of tissue tearing and thus infection becomes much higher. Secondly, it is often argued, unfavourable gender constructs render women subordinate and secondary to men, make them culturally and economically dependent on men, and so withhold them from abstaining from sex, demanding faithfulness, or insisting on condom use. Furthermore, malnutrition, which is widespread throughout Malawi and the rest of sub-Saharan Africa and which generally affects women more than men due to social inequalities, weakens the immune system and slows down the healing of genital ulcers, increasing the risk of HIV infection (Collins & Rau 2001, Gillespie & Kadiyala 2005, Stillwaggon 2006a).

Crosscutting these factors that are considered important drivers of the spread of HIV in Malawi (and beyond), many reports emphasize, are the structural inequalities and insecure livelihoods that the general population faces on a day-to-day basis. Such structural inequalities, as already discussed in Chapter 1, predispose marginalized people to higher health risks while hampering their access to health care. Malnutrition has just been mentioned; suboptimal, unhygienic living and working circumstances are another result of marginalisation that is likely to affect people’s health. Poverty is furthermore assumed to push men to migration and women to survival sex, and so too increase their risk of HIV infection (see Chapter 1). Gender inequality and low family incomes may curtail access to

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education, particularly for girls, which some studies have found to be associated with higher HIV risk (Krishnan et al. 2008: 103, Rodrigo & Rajapakse 2010: 12, but see also Baird et al. 2009: 5). Taken together, these interrelated factors form what is called an HIV ‘risk environment’ (Barnett & Whiteside 2006: 86) – the recognition of which is, as discussed in Chapter 1, an important step ahead from the earlier focus (and consequent blame) on individual sexual decision-making. However, as I will argue throughout this book, the acknowledgement of structural disadvantageous factors should not override our perceptiveness to other, less direct or more voluntary, factors that entice men and women to ignore safe-sex recommendations.

Preventive interventions

Official HIV prevention in Africa has focused by and large on informing the population about the existence of the new fatal virus and ways to avoid infection. The message that has been most widely promoted is usually summarized as ABC, short for Abstain, Be faithful or use a Condom (Barden-O’Fallon et al. 2004: 131, GoM 2010b: 64, Mbugua 2009). Especially the first recommendation, to completely abstain from sex, has been overemphasized in Malawi, at the cost of promoting condom use and partner reduction (Hardee et al. 2008: 3, GoM 2006b). This official emphasis on abstinence may have resulted from a strong, conservatively religious lobby within Malawi but also because large US donor agencies have objected against condom promotion because this is believed to encourage promiscuity. In the current national response to HIV and AIDS, however, condoms are explicitly recognized as an important prevention tool against HIV infection (GoM 2012: 31). Behaviour change campaigns are no longer concerned only with prevention messages, but increasingly also with treatment, care, support, and crosscutting issues like gender equality and human rights (ibid: 27). Print media, radio, television, band performances, drama shows, and interactive community sessions are used extensively by the Malawian government and nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) to transmit the various HIV and AIDS messages, leading Bryceson et al. (2004: 24) to speak of a “bombardment of educational information”.

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33 More precisely, UNAIDS defines ABC as standing for “Abstinence (not engaging in sex or delaying first sex), Being safer by being faithful to one’s partners or reducing the number of sexual partners, and Correct and consistent use of condoms” (UNAIDS 2004: 6). The ABC slogan was first coined in 1992 by the Filipino Secretary of Health, and subsequently picked up by major players in the field of HIV prevention, e.g. WHO, UNAIDS, USAID, and PEPFAR (Hardee et al. 2008). However, even before this specific slogan became en vogue, the international response to the spread of HIV largely revolved around the ABC recommendations, albeit under different formulations and in varying combinations (ibid).

34 Soon after his installation in 2009, US president Obama dismantled the law against the funding of agencies that promote condom use.
As a result of the focus on raising awareness, knowledge of *Edzi* – as AIDS is locally called – is nearly universal in Malawi (GoM 2011a: 166), and has been so for many years. In 1993 a survey undertaken in rural Southern Malawi found that virtually all respondents, male and female, already knew that the new disease was sexually transmitted and could not be cured. Most also knew that a healthy-looking person can be infectious, and infection can be prevented (Tavrow 1994 in Watkins 2004: 679, see also Foster 1998: 537). The most recent national Demographic and Health Survey indicates that almost 80 percent of all Malawians know that abstinence, monogamy, or condom use can reduce the risk of HIV transmission (GoM 2011a: 167). Equally high percentages know that HIV can be transmitted through breastfeeding, that mother-to-child transmission can be reduced through medication (GoM 2011a: 170), and that the virus cannot be transmitted through mosquito bites, the sharing of food, or supernatural means (GoM 2011a: 168). About half of the Malawian population answered all questions about HIV and AIDS correctly. Such comprehensive knowledge is highest among younger adults, and found to increase with wealth and education level. UNAIDS found that Botswana and Malawi scored best on knowledge of HIV and AIDS in sub-Saharan Africa (in Arrehag et al. 2006: 17).

Knowledge about HIV and AIDS is thus impressively accurate, considering the fact that education levels in Malawi are extremely low, only half of the households own a radio, and a mere 6 percent possess a television (GoM 2006a: 80). However, despite consistently correct answers to most survey questions concerning HIV
and AIDS, and a steady increase in respondents that affirm an intent to change behaviour and go for testing in the future, no actual, large-scale change in behaviours regarding the ABC recommendations has yet been observed (GoM 2012: 27, Peters et al. 2007: 94). Watkins (2004) has argued that this should not necessarily be taken to mean that Malawians do not respond to the threat of AIDS at all, pointing to several locally developed and applied strategies of prevention that fit better within the daily lives of rural Malawians than the ABC formula. These include reducing the number of partners, selecting partners more carefully, using condoms with partners considered particularly risky, persuading unfaithful partners to adopt safer practices or otherwise divorce, and seeking support for resisting temptations in religion (see also Forster 2001: 251, Kaler 2004a: 292-6, Peters et al. 2007: 43, Schatz 2005, Smith & Watkins 2005: 655).35

Besides awareness raising and behaviour change campaigns, HIV-prevention efforts in Malawi also entail biomedical interventions. These include STI diagnosis and treatment, HIV testing and counselling, prevention of mother-to-child transmission, male circumcision, post-exposure prophylaxis, and prevention of blood transmission of HIV (GoM 2012: vi). Antiretroviral treatment (ART) also reduces transmission risk, and is therefore also mentioned here. ART has in Malawi been accessible free of cost since 2003, initially distributed at nine urban sites. By the end of 2009 the number of distribution sites had increased to 337 (a minority of these are private health centres that charge money for treatment) (GoM 2009b: 8, GoM 2010b: 69). It is estimated that 65 percent of Malawian adults and children with advanced HIV infection received antiretroviral treatment in 2009 (GoM 2010b: 19).

Conclusion

In 1932 the British missionary Alexander Hetherwick working in Nyasaland wrote that “Africa stood still while the great human world outside was generation upon generation developing” (Chanock 1971: 434). His evolutionary view was shared by most other missionaries and colonial administrators. One such administrator wrote that the task of the colonial rulers was to “deliberately raise the races of our backward fellow men out of the Stone Age into the Age of Steel” (ibid: 435) – apparently unaware that the Bantus of Nyasaland had mastered the skill of melting iron into hoes, spears, and knives centuries ago. The so-called backward natives were, as a matter of fact, far from ‘untouched’ by time or change. When Livingstone arrived in the Lake Malawi area, signs of contact with outsiders were found everywhere. The people he ‘discovered’ were growing maize brought from

35 In Chapter 6 on sex, HIV, and AIDS I discuss the extent to which these alternative prevention strategies are practiced in Mudzi.
the Americas via the Portuguese, dressed in brightly coloured cotton cloths woven in Europe, and adorned with beads from Asia. The houses were built in an Arab style and the landscape was scattered with mango trees and coconut palms brought home after travels to the coast. An extensive tributary empire had risen and fallen, and the farming population had developed adequate means to grow sufficient food within a fragile ecology.

With a second agenda of self-advancement, the colonialists set out to ‘develop’ the ‘backward fellow men’ they encountered in Africa. After Independence until this day these international development efforts intensified, partly fed by a feeling of guilt about the preceding era of colonization. Nonetheless, as described in this chapter, for the majority of Malawians life has become harsher over the past 150 years. Their livelihoods have crumbled due to exploitative policies during the colonial era and Banda’s regime, corruption and disastrous donor policies during succeeding governments, diminishing land-holding sizes, severe soil degradation, climate change, high morbidity and mortality rates due to AIDS, and reduced employment opportunities abroad. Only recently has some progress become discernible, but this is now seriously jeopardized by the 2007 global economic crisis.

The various historic processes have over time had varying impacts on the matrilineal groups in Malawi, leading to different blends of matrilineal and patrilineal principles. The Chewa, for example, who were conquered by the patrilineal Ngoni and later sought refuge from slave traders at the Christian missions, have gradually transformed from a matrilineal into a more patrilineal organized society, exemplified by a shift towards virilocal settlement patterns, (occasional) payments of bride-wealth, and greater authority for husbands (Phiri 1983, Mair 1951b, Mtika & Doctor 2002). Several facets of Yao history, including their sufficient military power which allowed them to avert conquest by patrilineal groups and their conversion to the more eclectic Islam, allowed for the endurance of their essentially matrilineal organization in an increasingly patriarchal world – proving wrong the consensus among early anthropologists about matriliny’s unsustainability in modern times (e.g. Douglas 1969, Levi-Strauss 1969 [1949], Richards 1950, Schneider & Gough 1961).

This is not to say that Yao women’s social position has remained unaltered. A mix of material and socio-ideological factors has affected the power dynamics between Yao women and men. When reconstructing the historical development of Yao gender relations, several possible explanations emerge for the apparent paradox between women’s control over food and shelter, and their expressed need for male support. Firstly, the dwindling of plot sizes and soil fertility reduced the quantity of food under women’s control, and generated a need for purchasing power to supplement their own production. The job opportunities created by white settlers and the colonial regime were granted almost exclusively to men – who,
moreover, had long been responsible for extra-agricultural food supplementation (hunting) and wealth generation (long-distance trading). With more economic opportunities accessible to them, and the appropriate socio-cultural position to draw upon these, men’s position vis-à-vis women improved. Women’s control base diminished, while men’s increased. Subsequently, the charismatic and brutal ‘president-for-life’ Kamuzu Banda imposed upon Malawians his invented gender ideology which glorified women, but mainly as housekeepers for men who were to do the ‘real work’ of developing the economy. The perception of women as essentially inferior to men has then been reproduced by international development programs that commonly portray women as victims in need of empowerment.

These multiple historical factors seem to have led to a socio-ideologically advancement of men over women. However, as also noted in this chapter, actual fulfilment of the male role has become increasingly difficult in recent times. In the following chapter I will focus on one particular village community in Malawi – the fieldwork site which I call Mudzi – to assess how the processes described in this chapter materialize in the daily lives of contemporary men and women.
Introduction

In this chapter I introduce Mudzi, the southern Malawian village where the fieldwork for this study was conducted. I explain how the specific community was selected, and describe the site in demographic, environmental, and socio-economic detail. I portray the research site prior to presenting the research methodology (Chapter 4), because the community’s characteristics to some extent conditioned the methods used for data collection.

This general background includes a ‘visual’ tour through the village, a description of women’s daily lives, and an impression of the severe poverty they face. In the previous chapter I elaborated upon the ambiguous position of women vis-à-vis men in southern Malawi. In this chapter I begin to assess how this ambiguity materializes in the lived experiences of Mudzi women and men. This detailed portrayal of Mudzi and its inhabitants provides a basis for situating the ethnographic analyses presented in the chapters that follow.

Site selection

The village that I selected for the field study of this book is located in southern Malawi, because both food insecurity and HIV prevalence are substantially higher here than in the other regions (Devereux et al. 2006b: 21). As noted in Chapter 1, I assumed that a possible link between poverty and risky transactional sex may be most pronounced and best discernible here. The interrelated factors that are likely to underlie these disproportionately high levels have been discussed in Chapter 2.
Within the Southern Region, I opted for a village in Balaka\(^1\) district (Figure 3.1) because this allowed me to build upon an extensive range of relevant studies that arose from the Malawi Longitudinal Study of Families and Health\(^2\) (MLSFH). This longitudinal research project, undertaken by the University of Pennsylvania in collaboration with the University of Malawi, has assessed how rural Malawians are affected by and deal with HIV and AIDS since 1998. The MLSFH data consist of both quantitative survey data from one district per region including Balaka, as well as an unique qualitative data set in the form of locally written diaries, from Balaka only (see Watkins et al. 2003 for further elaboration).

Some of the criteria for the selection of the research village were set by the institute at which I worked.\(^3\) For safety reasons it had to be accessible even during the rainy season, and there had to be a mobile phone network. Within this setting, which was characterized by high levels of food insecurity and HIV prevalence, and the predominantly matrilineal and matrilocal social organization of the villages, I wanted to select as much as possible an ‘average’ village with regard to population size, proportion of female-headed households, and proximity to a main road or trading centre. The site I eventually selected had a geography and demography more-or-less average for Balaka district, as well as a mobile phone network. To safeguard the privacy of my informants I name this village Mudzi, which in ChiChewa means nothing more than ‘village’.

**Locality and demography**

Balaka district is located in the north-central part of the southern region. It has one of the highest levels of food insecurity within Malawi (AAH 2007). This is in part a result of the unfavourable climate, as Balaka is one of the hottest, driest districts of Malawi. It therefore remained sparsely populated until population pressure and Banda’s land confiscations for estate development pushed families to move here in the 1970s. The estimated HIV prevalence in Balaka of 18 percent is significantly higher than the national average of 11 percent.

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1. Over the past century, the area currently called Balaka has been part of districts called Kasupe, Mangochi, and Machinga, according to the different political and administrative regimes (Kaler 2001: 551). It also falls under the area referred to as the ‘upper Shire’, indicating its location relative to the Shire (or Tchiri) River (Mandala 2005: 25).

2. Until 2012, this research project was called the Malawi Diffusion and Ideational Change Project (MDICP).

3. Prior to and partly during this PhD study I was employed as social scientist at the International Crops Research Institute for the Semi-Arid Tropics in Malawi. See Chapter 4 for further elaboration on my personal background.
Balaka is a predominantly rural district. It is inhabited by little over 300,000 people, and has a population density (145 persons per square kilometre) similar to Malawi’s average at the time of the research (139 persons per square kilometre) (MPHC 2008: 9, 22). The terrain is relatively flat, the elevation level low, the climate hot and dry.

Only one congregation of buildings can be called a town. This boma – as district capitals are called – exists of one tarmac road which connects the district hospital, bus station, open market, police station, government extension offices, field offices of a number of NGOs, cotton and maize warehouses, small supermarkets, beer halls, several cheap hotels and cheaper rest houses, and restaurants that serve nsima or rice with chicken, fish, or beef stew. Balaka town is home to approximately 22,000 inhabitants (GoM 2008b: 29).

Mudzi village is located thirteen kilometre down a dirt road from Balaka town, a good two-hour bike ride away. Public transport does not travel here – only by foot, cycling, bike taxi, or private car can Mudzi be reached. There is a small weekly market at about two kilometres distance, and a trading centre five kilometres away. This latter place contains a government shop for maize and subsidized fertilizer, as well as a small hospital. Another clinic is located approximately four kilometres in the opposite direction, about an hour’s walk. This clinic only attends to maternal and child health issues, but also started to offer counselling and testing services for HIV and AIDS at the time of this study. Another village, at about half an hour’s walk, houses a fuel-generated mill, where women can have their maize ground into flou. The nearest primary school is located approximately two kilometres away, next to a Roman Catholic church. Churches from other denominations are located at further distances. A small mosque is found in Mudzi itself, in front of the compound of the (Yao and Islamic) Group Village Headwoman.

Photo 3.1: The village mosque

\[4\] Unless stated otherwise, the photographs in this book were taken by me.
On the official household list that I received from the district government staff, Mudzi village numbered 72 households, of which 48 were headed by an unmarried woman, the others consisting of a couple with their dependents. When I started to visit each household, however, I soon found that these numbers were far from correct. Many married couples had been enlisted as two separate households, while other persons on the list had died or moved elsewhere. During my stay some new households were founded while others dissolved, but at any time the total number of households remained between 35 and 40. This number was thus almost half the number of households that I had anticipated to live amidst and study.

Meanwhile, I found that my research community shared both its water pump and graveyard with the adjacent village community. A seemingly arbitrary line divided the scattered houses into two villages. I soon heard that until recently the communities had actually been parts of the same village. Only in 1996 did the village headwoman subdivide her community into six smaller units (the four other newly found villages are located at a farther distance and do not share a water pump with Mudzi), each headed by its own village leader, but still presided over by herself as Group Village Headwoman. Registering as separate villages was most likely a pragmatic response to the policy of many development schemes (both governmental and non-governmental) to target villages as the smallest administrative unit. Handouts, such as coupons for subsidized fertilizer, are usually distributed to village heads. Assuming this will increase the number of beneficiaries, many communities split up to register as separate villages (Harry Msere pers. comm., Chinsinga 2008: 17). For this same reason, presumably, the official household lists are populated with many ‘ghost’ households.

The adjacent community had an approximately equal population size (also nearly half the number of households that were officially registered). It felt only natural to include this community into my research sample. Doing so enlarged the number of households under study to (the more-or-less projected) 84, and the number of women to 90 (six households contained two generations of adult

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5 In conventional demographic terms a household that exists of a couple is per definition ‘male-headed’, and only households run by unmarried women are considered ‘female-headed’. As will become clear throughout this book, this terminology is misleading in the case of Mudzi, and probably for matri- and uxoriloclal households in general. Women and the children they care for form the core of such households, while husbands tend to come and go, remaining outsiders in many ways. I furthermore deliberately refrain from using the commonly used term ‘single women’ to denote women who are not in a conjugal relationship. In this, I follow Oyewùmí (2002), who states that from an African perspective the term ‘single mother’ is a contradicito in terminis. She argues that in much of Africa a woman’s identity is first and foremost defined by motherhood, not by a sexual relationship with a man. Mothers, she writes, can by definition never be single, as they have children (ibid). Because most (married and unmarried) Mudzi women are mothers, referring to those without husband as ‘single’ does not feel right.

6 This is the total number of households in the two adjacent communities, excluding a small number of bachelors’ houses, which are inhabited by young men who live alone but are often still fed by their mothers.
women, who form the target group of this study). In this study I use the term ‘Mudzi’ to refer to the community of the two officially separate villages, and only differentiate by calling them ‘Mudzi A’ (the initially selected site) or ‘Mudzi B’ (the adjacent community) when this is relevant.

Only the Group Village Headwoman says she was born in Mudzi; all the other elderly women moved here from overpopulated areas, following their maternal uncles who had gone to find new lands for his family to cultivate and settle on. Although for many it was difficult to remember the exact year, it seems most moved to Mudzi between the 1950s and 1970s. The new settlers received land from the chief – ancestors of the current Group Village Head, and subdivided it among their daughters or sister’s daughters when they went on to found their own families.

Of the total 90 women I interviewed (practically all the adult women of Mudzi A and B) 59 percent are of Yao descent, 16 percent are Lomwe, 10 percent are Ngoni, 4 percent Nyanja, 3 percent Chewa, 2 percent Sena and 6 percent uncertain. Of all the interviewed women, 59 percent identifies as Muslim, 14 percent as Roman Catholic, 10 percent Presbyterian, 6 percent Zambezi, 5 percent African Continent, 3 percent Seventh Day Adventist, 2 percent Jehovah’s Witness, and 1 percent Anglican. Religious affiliation, it must be noted, is not a given. Worshiping a god is considered a self-evident part of life, but the particular form of this devotion is of minor importance. Whether villagers referred to the god of their traditional Bantu cosmology, or that of the Christian or Islamic doctrine, they always used the word ‘Mulungu’ – indicating that these gods are considered one and the same. Followers of different denominations live together peacefully, sometimes even within one household. While funeral ceremonies differ according to the religious affiliation of the deceased, all corpses are buried at the same graveyard and funerals are in principle attended by all villagers alike. Switching religious affiliation (whether

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7 This number includes the one seventeen-year-old girl who had started a family in a household separate from her care-givers, and excludes one woman whose old age had affected her ability to sufficiently understand our questions.

8 President-for-life Kamuzu Banda actively propagated a shared national identity as Malawians rather than ethnic distinctiveness (Short 1974: 251–82 in Forster 2001: 255). Although it is usually considered easier to marry within one’s own ethnic group because of matching traditional customs regarding, among other things, location of settlement after marriage and allocation of children after divorce, intermarriage between ethnic groups, as with religious denominations, is not uncommon. Furthermore, during the pre-colonial era various ethnic groups had allowed marriage with war captives and slaves, which also facilitated the merging of ethnic lineages (Lamba 1985: 73, Pike 1968: 53). The history of interethnic marriages and Banda’s emphasis on a national identity has downplayed the social significance of ethnic affiliation. When I asked my informants about their mtundu [which broadly means ‘kind’, ‘type’, and ‘colour’, and is also used to refer to ethnic affiliation], a number of them took some time to think, had to ask a nearby family member, or answered that their ancestors were from different tribes, wondering out loud what this meant for their own mtundu. This is not to say, however, that traditional ethnic practices such as initiation rites are no longer valued and performed, as will be elaborated upon in Chapter 6. Most of these practices, notably, can be traced back to Bantu origins (see Saidi 2010), hence stemming from a history that is communally shared by most of Malawi’s current inhabitants.
between Christian denominations or Christianity and Islam), for pragmatic reasons such as joining a spouse or vicinity of a particular house of prayer, is common and not considered problematic [e.g. P2 0548, 0664, 1455, 1692; P3 0220, 1911, 2000, 2712, 3795]. In sum, the population of Mudzi is mixed, both in ethnic and religious denomination, but the majority is Yao and Muslim. Notably, the women about whom we gained most detailed information, because they lived nearest to our house in Mudzi and we interacted most intensively with them, were by and large Muslim Yao. A mixture of languages is spoken, but most conversations are held in Malawi’s official language ChiChewa.

The mean age of the interviewed women is 38, ranging from 17 to (an estimated) 88. Almost one-fourth of all village women never attended school, over half of them (57%) dropped out of primary school, and one-fifth finished primary school of whom half (N=10) continued on to secondary school, which none of them managed to finish. Financial problems and pregnancy were the main reasons mentioned for dropping out of primary and secondary school. The average household size is 4.3, ranging from one to nine members. At the time of the first interview 62 percent considered themselves married, and 38 percent were divorced, abandoned, or widowed (as we shall see later on in this book, these are all very transitory stages). Of the married women (N=56), eight lived without husband, as he was either imprisoned (N=1) or working in South Africa (N=7). In at least 18 households, the husband was only around on a temporary basis – surely or possibly dividing his time between multiple wives. Except for some adolescent bachelors who moved to a private hut near their mothers (who to some extent still catered to them), there were no households in Mudzi that were run by an unmarried man. In other words, the adult male population of Mudzi existed solely of men married to and living with their Mudzi wife. Occasionally a recently divorced man would temporarily seek refuge at his sister’s or mother’s house in Mudzi, but most of them found a new wife within days, in Mudzi or elsewhere. As we shall see in Chapter 5 on sexual relationships, the exact size of this married male population is instable due to frequent divorce (generally leading to a departure from the village) and remarriage.

Superfluous as it may be, I feel it is necessary to point out in this introduction of the Mudzi population that all villagers have their own personal character. People may be more or less proactive, abiding, serious-minded, light-hearted, buoyant, timid, assertive, persevering, et cetera. The choices that men and women make do not only depend on their socialization and material circumstances, but to a great extent also on their individual history and personality (see also Nooteboom 2003, Turner 1987). Although this study focuses particularly on the interactions between

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9 Nine of the 54 Yao women are not Islamic but followers of a Christian denomination (Zambezi Evangelical Church, Roman Catholic, CCAP, Jehovah’s Witness), and of the 53 Islamic women eight are not from Yao descent but Lomwe, Nyanja, and Ngoni.
historical, cultural, and material factors that shape people’s choices, it must be recognized and kept in mind that these alone do not explain all. Personality is always at play too in guiding people’s behaviour.

Mudzi daily life

*A ‘visual’ tour*

Comparing what I have seen of Mudzi life to the description of an average Yao village in the same region\(^{10}\) over half a century prior to my field study is both disturbing and revealing. James Clyde Mitchell (1956: 20) writes:

Most young men wear European-type clothing and shoes. Many own bicycles and sewing machines. Many houses have glass windows and panelled doors and most of them are furnished with some rough furniture which has been bought from local craftsmen. Many have beds and mosquito nets. Few women cannot boast enamel dishes to replace their clay pottery or china cups to replace drinking gourds. The food habits of the peoples too have broadened. Most households use sugar these days, and many people drink tea.

More than any of the statistics on the deepening poverty in Malawi, this account strikingly visualizes today’s impoverishment by exhibiting how prosperous Malawian villagers apparently once were.\(^{11}\) None of the current houses in Mudzi have glass windows, although some do have an iron-sheeted roof. Very few houses contain a bed or any other type of furniture. Most villagers sleep on a mat on the floor, and some do not even have that. Sugar and tea are rare luxuries. Most villagers go barefoot, and while all still wear European-type clothes, these are most often in rags.

Although in a distant past Yao houses had been round structures, since the trading expeditions to Arab settlements Yao builders began to copy the Arabic rectangular house shape that is still in vogue today. Walls consist of bricks that are homemade from the local soil and either burnt or sundried. Most houses have a gable, grass-thatched roof that usually leaks by the end of the rainy season and needs replacement every year. Some houses are merely one room, others are a bit bigger and have two or three rooms. One of these rooms may be used to keep the goats at night, so as to protect them against hyenas and thieves. Most houses, even the smallest, have a veranda, where one can shelter from the rain or sun without having to go inside where darkness prevails even during the day. Some women cook on this veranda – on an open fire with three stones to put the pot on, while others have a separate little structure for this near their house.

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\(^{10}\) Mitchell undertook his study throughout the whole area of Nyasaland where the colonial administration had recognized Yao chiefs as ‘Native Authorities’ (as opposed to chiefs with other ethnic backgrounds), which overlaps with (parts of) the current-day districts Mangochi, Machinga, Zomba, and Balaka, and includes the area where Mudzi is located.

\(^{11}\) As explained in the previous chapter, the Yao were fervent traders, a activity which during the pre-colonial era brought them wealth and power. Later, during the colonial period, waged labour opportunities abroad in particular brought some temporary prosperity.
A number of compounds have a pit-latrine at some distance from the house. The families that do not dig such a pit simply relieve themselves in the bushes or their neighbours’ pit-latrine. A screen of grasses called *bafa* is erected to take a bath out of sight of fellow villagers. Standing on a stone to avoid mud on the cleansed feet, villagers wash themselves by scooping water from a bucket over their body. Finally, one last structure found at many of the compounds is a granary for maize storage.

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12 I retrieved permission to use photographs from those depicted. However, as will be further discussed in Chapter 4, I doubt whether those concerned could understand exactly what they consented to. Therefore I have chosen not to link names (pseudonyms) to the pictures.
A small number of houses have a roof of corrugated iron sheets, and some even have concrete floors or concrete plaster on the walls. These are by and large paid for with money sent by husbands or sons working in town or South Africa. An iron roof is prestigious: It does not leak nor require annual replacement, but it does increase the temperature inside the house during the hot season.

Except for the concrete and iron-sheeted houses, most structures in the village need regular maintenance as long as they remain in use. When no longer maintained, they are soon overtaken by the elements. At the time of our arrival in Mudzi, a small house stood next to ours. The young man who used to live there had recently moved back to his grandparents’ because his grandmother was too busy taking
care of her chronically ill husband to bring the young man, a bachelor, cooked meals several times a day. The wind blew off most of the grass roof, the rains that followed washed away half of the sundried bricks that were now no longer protected by a roof. What was left was soon overgrown by bush and so further destroyed. By the next planting season, Gertrude and I planted sweet potatoes where less than a year before a house had still been inhabited.

In between the houses and outside the village borders lie the agricultural fields, and depending on the season the scenery looks dusty and barren or lush and green. Virtually the only trees that have not been cut down for firewood or construction material are mango trees – which provide an abundance of fruit just at the time that maize stores tend to run out.

Photos 3.6: The same locations in Mudzi before and during the rainy season

Daily life
A Mudzi woman commonly gets up before dawn, before her husband and children. Outside her house, either in a small kitchen or out in the open air, she makes a fire and puts on some water – if there is anything to prepare for breakfast, such as porridge, sweet potatoes, or tea. She then sweeps the sandy surroundings of her house with a short broom. Subsequently, she carries her tin or plastic bucket to the water pump to fetch water. Depending on where exactly she lives in Mudzi, this stroll takes a few minutes to almost half an hour. As most women follow this same routine, a large group amasses, and our average woman must queue to wait
her turn. Unsurprisingly, the water pump is the ultimate spot for social interaction. Whenever Gertrude heard of a new rumour, she would quickly grab a bucket and run off to the pump to find out all about it.

Photo 3.7: Women at Mudzi’s water pump

The main meal of the day is served at noon, and takes some preparation. Let us assume that on this average day our average woman already has some maize ground into flour, as she walked to the mill kilometres away with a bag full of dried maize kernels on her head some days before. Now she must sift the flour so as to avoid clumping. To make *nsima*, the thick maize porridge that forms the mainstay of each warm meal, the flour must bit by bit be added to boiling water, while stirring forcefully. *Nsima* is eaten from a shared plate, with the fingers of the right hand – which has been washed in a bowl of water prior to the meal. Each lump of *nsima* is dipped in a side dish to give it some taste. This side dish may consist of boiled green leaves, cabbage, chickpeas, okra, insects, or, when able to splurge, dried fish or even chicken, goat, or beef – depending on what is in season or what can be purchased. In the case of green leaves – the most common side dish – these must be looked for in the fields in or around the village (although they are sometimes bought from a passing-by vendor or at the nearest marketplace) and made edible by removing the many veins. When owning just one pot, the side dish and the *nsima* must be cooked successively. After the meal, the bowl of water is passed on again so all can wash their hands. Our woman then starts to clean the pots and plates, bending down deep, using water and sand to minutely scour all remains of food and char. If there is enough maize for another round of *nsima* that day, the same is done all over again just before dusk. Usually, fetching water is done several times a day – especially if the household does not own any other storage vessel for water than the one bucket in which it is fetched. Either in the early morning or late afternoon, the woman puts the bucket with water at the
bathing space and, while squatting down, tells her husband that he can go wash himself. After that she and her children wash their bodies behind the grass screen.

Other, non-daily tasks performed on a regular basis by women (and to some extent children) include collecting firewood, re-mudding the floor of their house, bringing maize to the mill for grinding, and washing the clothes and blankets (if owned) of all household members. The last two activities are, however, only carried out when money is available, to pay the grinder or buy soap.

If the fields need attending, this is mostly done in the early morning hours, before the heat sets in. The land must first be cleared of the bushes that grew since the last harvest – a task generally performed by men, sometimes by simply burning the bushes. Afterwards, ridges must be hacked in the dry, hardened soil. This is a physically demanding work that is ideally performed by men and women together. Choosing the right moment for planting seeds is tricky. The seeds need as much rain as possible, especially with the rainy season becoming gradually shorter each year. They should, however, not be planted too early as they will be wasted if the rains do not come through. After planting, the fields must be weeded every now and then – both of which are performed mainly by women and children.

Mudzi’s women predominantly grow maize (only when actively probed did the interviewed women mention the other crops that they grow, in between their maize plants, such as pumpkins, beans, chickpeas, and millet, revealing the minor importance attached to these). The majority of women also attributed a part of their plot to cotton (59 of the 88 households), some to cassava, rice, or tomatoes, and one to tobacco. When maize has matured and dried, it must be harvested and stored, either in the house or in the granary. Increasingly, Mudzi villagers prefer to keep their maize inside, afraid of thieves emptying their granary at night. The grains are manually removed from the cobs – a women’s (and children’s) job, which can be conveniently combined with sitting and chatting together with other women. If money is available, chemicals are bought to apply to the maize that is to be stored, to prevent loss to mice, weevils, or mould. This application is considered a male task. Having no man in our household, Gertrude – who without blinking would perform taxing physical tasks such as carrying heavy loads of water on her head, ploughing the dried soil, or chopping big logs of wood – asked the adolescent boy from next door to do this for us. It simply did not cross her mind to do it herself. The boy’s response showed neither surprise nor reluctance. A tacit understanding between the two about specifically designated gender roles led to the boy picking up the bottle of chemicals, sprinkling the content over our maize, and departing. I will return to the strict division of gender roles later on in this chapter.

During several brief periods over the year Mudzi women were kept busy performing these agricultural duties. Most other days, however, they had plenty of leisure time in between the performance of their duties in and around the house. This time was used to rest in the shade, visit each other to chat, braid each other’s
hair, or play bawo or cards (except for the hair braiding, men spend their leisure time likewise, complemented by some with drinking locally brewed beer or spirit). The abundance of leisure time goes against a common assumption in development circles that women’s failure to generate an independent income stems from a heavy domestic workload which leaves them too little time for additional activities (e.g. Booth 2000, FAO 2011, OECD 2012, UNDP 2009). Although indeed Mudzi women spend much more time per day on typical women’s tasks than men seem to do on typical male tasks (as found to be the case throughout rural Malawi, see Mathiassen et al. 2007: 37), this does not mean that women have no free time. In Chapter 8 I will discuss several other factors that in Mudzi seemed to underlie women’s reluctance to engage in making money.

Most likely, during at least some of the above-mentioned activities, whether duty or pleasure, the average woman carried her youngest child on her back, swinging it to the front every now and then to breastfeed. Most likely too, she is helped with her chores by one or more of her daughters. When daughters are not available, or when boys are considered more appropriate, for example to cycle to the maize mill, sons are at times ordered to help out too.

Poverty levels

Food insecurity

Hunger is not just one of the many faces of poverty – it is the ultimate sign of it. Having no food also means having nothing else but a few bare necessities. Embarrassingly, this struck me as a new realization when I looked for toilet paper while squatting above a hole in the floor of a tiny mud hut at my first study site. It took some time before it hit me how terribly naïve it was to expect a luxury thing like toilet paper in a place where people cannot even manage to supply their body with its minimal daily energy requirements. Not having food means not having soap to wash one’s body or clothes, no blanket to protect against cold nights, and no candle to dispel the darkness after 6 p.m.

In his classic book, *The moral economy of the peasant* (1976: 34), James Scott rightfully argues that the question to ask is not how poor peasants are, but how precarious their livelihood is. Living near subsistence level but feeling secure enough never to fall below it – because of some reliable form of insurance against it – is an essentially different situation from living at times in abundance but with the persistent threat of hunger and possibly starvation. As Scott argues, these contrasting situations trigger significantly different technical, social, and

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13 Childcare does not seem to prevent women from going around doing what they want either. The youngest are taken along tied on their mother’s back, while the others are often simply left playing around the compound [e.g. P3 1314].
moral arrangements in a society. Food or livelihood insecurity is thus of central importance to understanding the daily life experiences of Mudzi men and women.

As already hinted at earlier, and analysed at a national level in Chapter 2, food security in Mudzi is highly fragile. Periods of scarcity and abundance alternate with periods in which there is just enough to get by. For some time after the harvest, varying from weeks to a full year, villagers can eat their own produce – depending on the size of their harvest and their ability to hold on to it.\(^\text{14}\) When a family’s stored maize is nearing its end, economizing starts [e.g. P3 1016, 3961, 4083, 4101]. \(Nsima\) is then eaten only once a day instead of twice, and becomes increasingly diluted each day until only a liquid porridge (\textit{phala}) remains [P2 0442, 0665, 0698-701, 0752, 0762, 0878, 0885, 1037, 1043, 1129, 1200-2, 1223, 1264; P3 1063, 3799, 4097, 4099]. Maize meals are skipped or substituted with boiled green leaves or mangoes (boiled too, if still green), which grow in abundance during part of the rainy season [P2 0567, 0762, 1129, 1176, 1182, 1200, 1214, 1216, 1221, 1236; P3 0720, 0761, 1023, 1063, 1094-6, 1122, 4076]. As long as there is enough maize, the grains are peeled for softer flour and finer \(nsima\) [P2 1702]. When little maize is at hand, however, the grains are left unpeeled so as to increase the volume of the flour, at the expense of taste [P2 1079, 1185].

Eventually, when all the maize is finished, the skins that were removed earlier and have not been used as fodder or for beer brewing are pounded to make (a bitter-tasting) flour [P2 0878; P3 1539-41, 1753, 2860]. When possible, social relations who have maize are begged to share some of it [P2 0701-2, 0724, 1185, 1229, 1232, 1282, 1334, 1424, 1446, 1508; P8 0006]. As the stores get depleted, money must be found to buy (usually small quantities of) maize – which is exorbitantly expensive\(^\text{15}\) during this time of overall scarcity [P3 1630]. Alternatively, other types of food that are considered inferior to maize, such as cassava, are also bought at relatively high prices [P2 1086, 1094, 1096, 1101]. To find money for these foods, livestock is sold (at desperately low prices), piece-work sought, business profits consumed instead of reinvested, and cash or maize borrowed at high pay-back rates\(^\text{16}\) [P2 0477, 0719-20, 0920, 0922, 1056, 1067, 1093-4, 1103, 1161, 1176, 1182, 1216, 1358, 1526, 1612, 1870; P3 1021, 1023, 1175, 1553, 1559, 3770, 4097]. Many villagers go days without any maize meal, eating bits of whatever other food they can get, and in the worst cases nothing at all [P2 0698-700, 0920-2, 1093, 1101, 1282; P3 1016, 1122, 1799, 4062]. During the hunger months

\(^{14}\) As will be explained further on in this chapter and in Chapter 8 on women’s income-generating options, produce, whether surplus or not, is often sold or shared with others.

\(^{15}\) During the season of scarcity the government institute ADMARC sells maize at a reasonable price (MK52 per kg in 2009) at depots throughout the country, but is often out of stock. Much of its maize is bought by middlemen who resell it for higher prices (up to MK100 per kg in 2009). After harvest, prices dropped to MK25 per kg in 2009.

\(^{16}\) During the 2008/2009 hunger season several brokers in and around Mudzi offered money which was to be repaid after harvest with 50 kg of maize per 1000MK borrowed [P2 1358], hence for a price of MK20 per kg, which is below the government-set price of MK52/kg and far below the maize price of MK70/kg to MK100/kg during these months of scarcity.
that we spent in Mudzi, some orphans who stayed with caretakers in the village decided to move to live with relatives elsewhere who still had some maize, while others were bluntly evicted because of their foster home’s food shortage [P2 0777, 0787, 1112, 1221; P3 0866]. When there is no food to be found anymore (or no money to pay the high price of it), certain tree roots are dug up, peeled, boiled, and eaten to at least fill the stomach. “Going to bed hungry” is the typical expression that Mudzi villagers use to denote their suffering during the season of scarcity [e.g. P2 0128, 1043, 1274; P3 0274, 1839, 3858]. The duration of the hunger period varies per year, as it partly depends on rainfall patterns, but also per household, as will be further explained in the next sub-section. On average, it lasts from November to March (see Figure 2.1 in Chapter 2), and peaks in January and February.

Most agricultural activities are to be carried out during this period of food insufficiency (which also coincides with the hottest period of the year) – making the physically heavy tasks even more difficult, hampering the size of the subsequent yield [P2 0665, 1030, 1037, 1214; P3 2352]. The need for cash to buy food and the abundance of work to be done on the fields, furthermore, together create a market for hired ganyu labour. This allows farmers in need of money to survive [P2 0806], yet also obstructs the work they should do on their own fields, thus perpetuating their food insecurity [e.g. P3 4087].

Towards the end of the rainy season there are no mangoes left in the trees, and no ganyu opportunities left in the fields [P2 0631, 0666, 0682, 0698, 0920, 0926, 1182, 1202]. The farmers’ eyes grow increasingly hollow, their faces shrunk, and their bodies frail, while the surroundings become lush and the maize plants tall [e.g. P2 1504; P3 1532, 2456]. Activities are reduced to a minimum; villagers lie listlessly in the shade of their huts, waiting for the hours to pass and the maize to mature. To maximize the amount of nsima that can be made per unit of maize, cobs must dry on their stem before harvest. Understandably, however, the patience needed for this cannot be mustered by those who slept with empty stomachs for numerous nights in a row. As soon as the first maize cobs have matured, these are picked one by one, and eaten from morning to evening boiled or roasted, roasted or boiled [e.g. P2 1405, 1410; P3 1306, 1532, 1616, 1630]. In an attempt to make nsima from fresh maize, some grains are put to dry in the sun before grinding [P3 1310, 1602, 1615, 1757, 1799, 1800]. This, however, results in relatively low quantities of nsima, and is in fact a waste of precious maize.

When the remaining cobs have finally dried on the stem, they are quickly harvested before thieves can do so. Almost as a revenge for the hardship suffered, the wide availability of maize and other food crops is now lavishly celebrated [P2

17 I did not witness this in Mudzi, but in one of the two pilot sites during the year prior to my stay in Mudzi.
18 In his review of famine studies Dirks (1980: 23) found that low caloric intake leads peasants to work slower and rest longer.
Large quantities of white-flour *nsima* are eaten at lunch and dinner, and sometimes breakfast too [P2 0651, 1503, 1504, 1716, 1766; P3 0537, 1532, 2672]. Bits of maize are also sold on a regular basis, to acquire cash for luxury food and non-food items. Men and women spend many hours playing cards, and maize is contributed to serve as the jackpot for the winner [P2 1683, 1698, 1761, 1794]. Initiation ceremonies for pre-adolescents, remembrance ceremonies for deceased relatives, and other celebrations for which elaborate feasting meals must be prepared are organized at this time of food abundance [P2 1479, 1483; P3 1959]. Some farmers manage to keep seeds from one harvest to the next planting season, but as most seeds are edible, few can resist eating them [P3 0846, 0968, 1018, 1020, 1025, 1030]. When the next planting season arrives these farmers either beg small amounts of seeds from multiple connections in their social network [P2 0462; P3 1018, 1025], work on wealthier farmers’ fields in exchange for seeds [P2 0477, 1011, 1016], or look for money to buy seeds at the market [P2 0405, 0462, 0477, 0619, 0918; P3 1030].

**Diversity**

Clearly, the levels of food security are not the same throughout Mudzi. To determine which criteria most aptly indicate a household’s position on the poverty spectrum vis-à-vis the other Mudzi households is not a straightforward exercise. Depending on my quantitative data alone would probably have led to conclusions that are incongruent with what I observed. In many cases some background information on the particular respondent was necessary to value the comparative weight of the various indicators. For example, all those in the upper segment of the poverty-wealth spectrum live in relatively large houses with an iron-sheeted roof, but such a house cannot by itself be taken as a direct indicator of prosperity. The house may be no more than a remnant of a past period of access to sufficient means, for example through an employed husband who died or left long ago. Hiring labourers to help cultivate one’s field too may seem a plausible indicator of relative wealth. However, among Mudzi’s most food insecure are two women who by all means find ways to hire help because they are physically too weak to cultivate enough land. They believe that investing in hired labour is cost effective for them. Furthermore, having no maize left within months after harvest is not the indicator of food insecurity that it may appear to be, as women with access to a regular source of financial support can buy maize whenever necessary. Even these women

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19 The selling of non-surplus crops will be further elaborated upon in Chapter 8.

20 This confirms the argument of Wolf Bleek (1987b) – a pseudonym of anthropologist Sjaak van der Geest – that when data is retrieved through informants’ self-reports, its validity (hence the extent to which the particular data give an accurate indication of the issue to be measured) can only be ascertained and assured by the familiarity of the researcher with the informant and his or her context.
may at times be rationing their food, however, if it is unclear when exactly the next sum of money, for example from a husband working in South Africa, will be accessible to them. Their rationing does not indicate the same level of food insecurity as does that of women with no external sources of support.

Furthermore, in a number of cases women exaggerated their deprivation during the interviews (see Chapter 4). Such concealment seemed very widespread, but was particularly done by women who were somewhat better off. Maybe these women simply had more to conceal, or maybe they were (partly) better off because they knew best how to take advantage of a situation (e.g. by positioning themselves as more destitute in my interviews, which many suspected to be a stocktaking exercise preceding some form of development assistance). Depending on the formal interview data alone would therefore have led to an overestimation of the level of food insecurity in Mudzi.

By combining the results of quantitative interviews with our observations and informal conversations I categorized all Mudzi households into the three levels of poverty: the best off, the worst off, and those in between. This categorization is subjective as it is to a certain extent based on my personal judgment, but I believe it is more ‘objective’ (closer to reality) than a classification based merely on quantitative facts. I could have chosen to create a greater number of levels for a more precise stratification, but for the purpose of this study I believe that a rough impression of the two extremes between which all Mudzi households range is adequate enough. Of all Mudzi households, I found eight to stand out as most food secure and nine others to suffer exceptionally hard. The remaining households ranged in between.

Only the eight ‘best-off’ households are reasonably assured of year-round daily access to sufficient quality food (although a severe drought or other natural disaster would certainly affect them too). Most years their members manage to grow or buy a surplus of maize. They either sell this surplus at high prices during the hunger season, or with it pay poorer fellow villagers to cultivate their fields. One of these households is that of Mudzi’s Group Village Headwoman. Due to her status and power she can annex natural resources as well as resources that are brought into the community by development agencies, or demand shares from the resources of ‘her’ Mudzi people [e.g. P2 0701-2, 0752; P3 0402, 0676, also P3 1460]. Furthermore, two of this woman’s adult sons work in South Africa, and send her financial support if requested, for example when a funeral had to be organized for their father [P2 0304, 0778; P3 1517, 1749, 2077]. Three other ‘best-off’ households consist of elderly people (two married couples, one unmarried woman) who also have adult sons and daughters with jobs or employed partners in town. They have for years been helped by these children to build a solid house, buy sufficient inputs for good yields, and survive the meagre months without corroding their future food base [P2 0406; P3 4018, 4073]. All four prime-aged women in this group of most prosperous
households have a husband who for several years has had a steady, relatively substantial income, three of them in South Africa. The fourth is a pastor who lives in Mudzi with his wife. As the man is from a patrilineally organized ethnic group, the couple had initially settled in his natal village. However, after repeated accusations of witchcraft, they decided to move to the wife’s home village Mudzi. According to this woman, the accusations were a response to the agricultural success that they apparently had in the past [P3 4050]. My guess would be, without having any proof for it, that this success is, to some extent at least, related to the man’s position as pastor, which offers him various formal and informal means of acquiring money. The houses of these various families have iron-sheeted roofs, multiple rooms, and some furniture inside. One of the elderly men can often be seen sitting in front of his house in a meticulously white shirt, ironed pants, and shiny leather shoes – all pretty unique in Mudzi.

The women whom I position at the most deprived end of the poverty spectrum either a) are physically unable to properly cultivate their fields and lack support to compensate for this; b) remain married to a husband who does not help but does consume and spends parts of the household’s harvest on beer, cigarettes, or gambling; or c) have been particularly unlucky with a sequence of partners who left them with children to take care of without providing any support. These most deprived families generally live in small, one-room houses with thin grass-thatched roofs, and often lack a kitchen, pit-latrine, and bathing place. None of these households own a radio, bicycle, or bed. A few do not even own a mat to sleep on, but instead use a sack in which maize is usually stored, with only the chitenje\textsuperscript{21} that they wear during the day as blanket. Some must borrow a pot for each meal they cook, as their own has worn out and buying a new one is out of reach. Their hunger season lasts longest and is most severe because their yields are small and finish early. Those who are physically weak cannot compensate this by working on other farmers’ fields in exchange for cash or maize. These families sometimes go days without any food at all. The one characteristic that goes for all women in this group, and for none in the others, seems to be the fact that they never splurge. Even right after harvest they feel the breath of hunger on their necks. They hold on to the little maize they have, while others at this time tend to sell bits of their maize harvest to purchase clothes, snacks, household utensils, or other relative luxuries.

Most households can be categorized between these two extremes. Their members struggle but manage to get along day by day; they go hungry on some days but find food the next; they have few possessions but when obtaining a bit of money may treat themselves to some luxuries like dried fish, a donut, or hair chemicals. Most

\textsuperscript{21} The colourful cloth that women wear over their skirt to protect it from dirt, and that is also used to carry babies and toddlers on their back. Plural: zitenje.
live in two-roomed houses with grass-thatched roofs, and often have a separate kitchen and bathing place outside. They tend to sleep on a mat and under a blanket. Some even own a bicycle, which they hold on to also in times of hunger as it helps them to find piece-work at some distance when there is none available nearby.

Obviously, villagers can move up and down the continuum of poverty levels. Lovely (age 29), for example, was orphaned during childhood and struggled to get along without much adult support. Hoping to escape from her lonely ordeal, at 13 she married a boy she met while doing *ganyu*. For years the young couple lived in severe poverty, sleeping with an empty stomach many nights, losing three of their children in infancy. Recently the husband decided to try his luck in South Africa. Lovely and her children now eat every day. She even has a mobile phone proudly hanging around her neck, and her tiny hut is furnished with a table and chairs.

Christina (age 34), on the other hand, managed to more or less get by when her husband was still around to help her on the field. The man also generated money for the household through *ganyu* labour. He recently abandoned her to marry another wife, however, leaving her pregnant and with three young children to take care of. She fears the hardships that she is prone to face during the upcoming hunger season. Similarly, Magda (54) lived a reasonably secure life when two of her adult children were employed in town. At least when food shortages became pressing and when agricultural inputs needed to be purchased she could usually count on their support. When both children died some years ago, Magda’s fortune did as well [P3 4037].

It appears from this analysis that most Mudzi farmers do not manage to grow enough food to feed their family from one harvest to the next. The few who harvest enough can do so only because they get external financial support to augment their farm’s productivity [see also P3 0276, 0301, 3015-6]. In other words, although often called ‘subsistence farmers’, not one Mudzi farmer can subsist on agriculture alone. To survive, they are in need of supplementary food, seeds, fertilizer, and chemicals for storage.

• Sexual relationships and livelihood security
A potential correlation that is of particular relevance to this study is that between marriage or sexual relationships and livelihood security. It appears from the above analysis that external sources of support are essential for a certain level of livelihood security. One potential way to gain access to such an external source of support is through marriage to a man working in town or abroad. From the above analysis it indeed appears that marriage (or divorce) can be a decisive factor for a woman’s movement up (or down) the continuum.

Marriage is, however, not a prerequisite for prosperity, as even among those classified as best off one woman has been without a partner for many years already. Nonetheless, it is striking that the others in this category are either elderly women who have a stable, long-term marriage with a husband who tends to collaborate for
the greater benefit of the household, or prime-age women who have an employed husband able and committed to provide regular and substantial support. In both cases, marriage is at least a facilitating factor for their relative prosperity. In the first, that of steadily wed elderly women, livelihood security stems largely from the fact that these women harvest more than they need. This surplus results from the financial support they receive from employed children at crucial times, such as when agricultural inputs such as seeds, fertilizer, and ganyu labour are needed, or when unexpected shocks such as disease or death occur. The fact that they have few dependents and a husband who actively participates in running the farm further adds to their welfare.

For the prime-age women who have employed husbands, marriage is undisputedly their main source of livelihood security. However, for half of all women married to a migrant man (hence also those in the ‘average’ group) this security is fragile. These are the women who were not born in Mudzi, but moved here upon marriage. Their relatively prosperous position is precarious because upon divorce they will have to leave behind all the wealth that accumulated around them, such as the iron-roofed house, the bed, blankets, radio. From one day to the next, on the whim of their husbands, their comfortable life may come to an end, and they will have to start from scratch again in their natal village. This happened to Sofia:

Shortly after we arrived in Mudzi, Sofia (25) moved into the house next to ours. For years she had lived in Balaka town with her husband, who traded in sugar. Pictures of that period show Sofia with round cheeks, long braided hair, and fancy clothes. Her husband, however, took an interest in their landlady’s daughter, and this girl soon expected his child. Not long after, the man sent Sofia back to her home village Mudzi, together with their four children, one of whom was still a baby. Sofia was reluctantly taken in by the grandmother who had taken care of her since childhood. Having lived in town, Sofia had no maize stores of her own and depended on charity. Within in a few months, she and her children visibly shrivelled, and her baby became so weak that he barely survived. [P2 0276; P3 1635, 1867]

All the other women, who at marriage remained in their natal village following the commonly observed matrilocal residence rules, are entitled to the house built by their husband (or children). In these cases it is the husband who will have to move away if either one decides to divorce. He may take with him some of the assets assembled during the marriage and claim half of the harvest if he helped to cultivate it. But a woman’s investments in her house, her field, and her direct social network are secured, regardless of her husband’s decisions. These women can therefore in general be considered more livelihood secure than those married virilocally.

While the welfare of some women derives (directly or indirectly) from marriage, in several other cases the husband actually caused or contributed to a household’s deteriorating financial and food security. Of the nine women whom I categorized as the most deprived, five are steadily married. Four of them have a husband who misuses much of the household resources for his own pleasures (beer, cigarettes, gambling, snacks, radio batteries). As a matter of fact, none of the women in the
top and middle segment complained about such behaviour from their partner – they were either not married, or had a partner who they felt reasonably behaved himself. Some had been married to a mischievous husband in the past, but divorced him because of it. It appears that marriage thus can be a direct cause to food or livelihood insecurity, too. The reasons for women to stay married to a man who gives little and takes a lot are delved into in Chapter 5, which focuses on women’s choices concerning relationships. In the particular cases of the four Mudzi women in the worst-off segment, it seems that they have become used to enduring their husbands’ behaviour, dread enraging them, prefer not to be regarded with disrespect and distrust for being divorced, fear never finding another man, and doubt whether a new man, if they would find one at all, would behave any better.

Some of the worst-off women simply seem to have been unfortunate in their choice of sexual partners, as many of these men left them with children to care for but without the necessary support to do so. For other women, however, having a sequence of partners turned out relatively well. To effectively run their household, farm, or small-scale business, these women benefit from the occasional inputs they may still get or ask from one of the fathers (or paternal grandmothers) of their children (see also Swidler & Watkins 2007). This too will be further elaborated upon in Chapter 5.

It appears that a woman’s livelihood security is not directly related to her relationship status. This is an interesting finding in light of the main research question on the potential link between poverty and women’s sexual relationships. Steady marriage can be either beneficial, detrimental, or neutral to a woman’s livelihood security. The same goes for frequent partner change. What does seem to impact a household’s wealth status is the type of partner that a woman is involved with. A woman fortunate enough to have wed a man who is committed to investing long-term in the development of her household is more likely to end up in the better-off segment of the community. Women who for some reason choose to remain with an unsupportive husband are more likely to end up in the worst-off segment. It seems reasonable, then, that in general women pursue a relationship with the former type, and end relationships with the latter. Men of the former type are hard to find, however, as few feel sufficiently certain of a lasting marriage to ‘bet on one horse’. If they do, they risk losing all in case of divorce. Possibly as a way to increase their own livelihood security, many men maintain (formal and informal, active and latent) relationships with various women – to which end they must necessarily divide, and thus dilute, the scarce resources they have. Not surprisingly, some women, finding one man after another not fully committed to their household, continue their search for a better partner – and so, unwillingly, facilitate the spread of HIV.
Gender relations

Gender roles and realities
As most Mudzi inhabitants (at least 80 percent\textsuperscript{22}) descend from matrilineally organized ethnic groups, it is customary here that a husband moves to his wife’s natal village, builds her a house, and, ideally, helps to cultivate the fields she inherited from her mother or received from the chief. In case of divorce, a man moves away, leaving the children and the house to his wife. Rather than for his biological children, a man carries responsibility for his sisters’ children – the ones with whom he shares his mother’s blood. Consequently, women are in theory linked more closely to their maternal uncles and brothers than their fathers and husbands (Bryceson et al. 2004: 10, Lawson 1949: 181, Mitchell 1961: 33, Vaughan 1985: 185) [see P3 2109]. However, this relationship between women and their male matrikin (who tend to live elsewhere, namely at their wife’s compound) is predominantly ritual and political in nature. Several authors have noted that in southern Malawi the matrilineage hardly plays an economic role in the daily lives of its members (Mandala 1990: 51, Morris 2000: 25, Vaughan 1983: 277-8, Vaughan 1987: 120; see also Bleek 1987a: 144 on Ghana) [e.g. P2 1490]. For actual, day-to-day physical and economic support, women must turn to a husband (or, if he fails, his matrikin) – who is, through marriage, brought into a female matrikin unit partly for that very purpose (Mitchell 1956, Mwambene 2005: 15, Phiri 1983: 259, Richards 1969 [1940]: 23). The case of Sofia illustrates some of these husband-versus-matrikin tensions. Especially because her situation was somewhat out of the ordinary, since upon divorce she had no house or maize stores of her own, the negotiations over who should help her became explicit:

Upon her return to Mudzi, Sofia hoped to be taken in by her maternal grandmother – who had cared for her throughout her youth. This woman was, however, unwilling to provide for Sofia and her four children. Instead, she ordered Sofia to move into the compound of her ex-husband’s mother and sister, so that they would pressure her ex-husband into providing for her and their children at least until the next harvest. Eventually, it was the man’s elder brother who took the responsibility of solving (part of) the problem by promising to build a house for Sofia and her children. Meanwhile, Sofia received food gifts from her mother-in-law and ex-husband (although generally insufficient, as noted earlier). She begged support from her brother working in South Africa, but he told her that it was her ex-husband who had given her all these children and who therefore should take care of them. When I asked Sofia if there were legal means to compel sufficient support from her ex-husband, she confirmed this, but added that she would want her own brother to come back to Malawi to speak up for her in court. [e.g. P2 0276-7, 1383, 1393, 1514, 2113; P3 1679, 1755]

Some women based in Mudzi do not live among their own but their husband’s maternal kin, forming an exception to the rule. In these cases, the husband migrated

\textsuperscript{22} Twelve percent of Mudzi women consider themselves as belonging to an ethnic group that follows patrilineal descent, and six percent were born from a union between patrilineal and matrilineal descendants.
to town or abroad for work and requested his wife to move from her own to his natal village so that his matrikin can keep an eye on her [e.g. P2 1440; P3 0806, 1639, 1776, 1888]. The strong financial position of these men was probably decisive in their wives’ (N=5) obedience in breaching the matrilocal custom. It thus appears that whereas uxorilocality originally may have facilitated or even stimulated Yao men’s long-term absence – as described in Chapter 2 – now men’s absence seems to promote virilocality. The tendency of wives of migrant men to transfer to their husband’s home village was already noted in the 1940s by Read (1942: 624–8) and Marwick (1965: 97), who expected this process to proliferate and in the long run threaten matrilocal custom and matrilineality (Phiri 1983: 271–2). However, most of the ‘dislocated’ women in Mudzi felt ill at ease among their husband’s matrikin [e.g. P2 1161, 1617, 1827, 1832; P3 0966, 1503, 1888, 1998], and during our stay in Mudzi, several got fed up with the gossip and conflicts they faced and moved back to their natal village [P2 1827, 1832; P3 1998, 4012, 4019]. In practice, thus, virilocality does not seem sustainable within the generally matrilocal Mudzi setting.

Land has always been and remains predominantly in the hands of women, who receive it from their mothers or the village head upon marriage or when otherwise considered ready to start taking care of themselves. This is not to say, however, that men cannot and never do have usufruct to some land. When I asked one of Mudzi’s elderly women how it came to be that only her daughters held some land in the village, even the one who lived with her husband in town, she simply answered that her son could get a plot if he would want to. As a matter of fact, over one-third of Mudzi husbands have some land, most of them at some distance in their home village. Historical studies show that this has been the case at least since the 1940s (Mitchell 1950, Vaughan 1985: 183). Those who have entitlements to a plot within Mudzi are mainly close relatives of the Group Village Headwoman – her brother, sons, and husband. Others, as did the Group Village Head’s husband, received a part of their wife’s field after a long, steady marriage, so as to encourage the man’s labour on the fields. On their own plot, men mostly grow cash crops, as it is their wife’s duty to feed them anyway.23

Domestic duties are clearly divided between the genders and this division has changed little since recorded by early anthropologists (Mitchell 1962, Richards 1969 [1940], Tew 1950). Culturally endowed with entitlement to land, women have been and still are responsible for and in control of food cultivation and preparation (Alpers 1975: 16, Hirschmann & Vaughan 1984: 9–13, Mandala 1982: 30). Writing about the matrilineal Makhulu of northern Mozambique (adjacent to southern Malawi), Arnfred (2007: 148–9) has pointed out that women’s cooking should not be equated with the low status that this housewife’s task has in the

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23 Although divorce is common, most men easily find a new wife or even wives (see next chapter). Therefore, men can be relatively assured of their access to food and need not grow maize themselves.
Western context. Food, she emphasizes, is a prestigious domain of power. Although this power domain has diminished in strength over the years, as discussed in the previous chapter, it has not vanished. With this right to land and thus food, comes, however, the strongly felt and upheld moral obligation of a woman to feed her husband, children, and other household members. It indeed appears from our data that a Mudzi woman can refuse to warm the water for her husband’s bath, refrain from conversing, and reject sexual advances, but to deny him a plate of nsima is under no circumstances considered acceptable [P2 0125, 1303, 1403; P3 0550, 3316–9, 3850].

In an attempt to formally lay down Yao marital law, Ibik (1970: 19) recorded that a Yao woman’s duties in marriage consist of exclusive sexual and domestic services towards her husband. Mitchell (1962: 37) writes that when he studied the Yao in the 1940s, these duties were conceived of as a whole, so that even cooking for another man than a husband is considered adultery. My data confirm that this is still the case today [e.g. P2 1392].

When asked about the main differences between men and women, several Mudzi women remarked that when both return home after having worked in the field, men sit down to relax while women still have to fetch water and firewood, put out water for her husband to wash his body, prepare and serve food, and wash dishes and pots [P3 2937-8, 2982, 3122, 3337-8, 3646]. Throughout Malawi, women indeed carry the brunt of daily chores (Mathiassen et al. 2007: 37), as they are expected to perform most agricultural tasks, domestic tasks (fetching water, collecting firewood, cooking, and cleaning the house, compound, kitchen utensils, and clothes), and child-rearing tasks. Mudzi men and women furthermore feel that good wives are not talkative or rude. During initiation rites and upon marriage, women are instructed to always respect and abide their husband [P3 2676, 3285–6, 3387–8]. Development sector reports often mention this point as indication that Malawian women suffer from severe gender inequality (e.g. White et al. 2005). These reports overlook the fact that men, at least those in Mudzi, are during initiation and upon marriage also formally instructed to listen to, respect, and care for their wives [P2 2042; P3 0506, 2676, 3283–6, 3389]. An example of how this may work out in practice came from Rosemary (49). She had decided to divorce her second husband – who displeased her anyway because he never helped in the field – when he one day denied her request to carry some water to the bafa for her when she was ill and tired from hard work. Indeed it was a female task to do so, but she felt “it was not showing respect” that her husband refused to assist now that she was weak and exhausted. She complained to the chief, who fined the man with buying clothes for Rosemary and her children, and accepted her divorce request [P3 0506]. Despite this example, it seems that overall, women’s social position depends on conformation to prescribed gender norms to a greater extent it does for men – a point I return to shortly.
The features of a good husband mentioned most by Mudzi women entail helping to cultivate the fields, providing money for soap and clothes, and building and maintaining the house, kitchen, bathing place, maize granary, and pit-latrine [P2 0550, 0992, 1456; P3 0548, 0747, 1563, 3766, 3793, 3841, 3847, 3858, 3863, 3927, 3937, 3945, 3970, 3994, 4002, 4004, 4006, 4011, 4018, 4019, 4020]. Furthermore, Mudzi women prefer that their husbands do not have other wives [P3 0732, 0742, 2586, 3839, 3992]. Features mentioned more sporadically concerned refraining from violence, being nice to his wife’s children (also if they are not his), helping his family-in-law, abstaining from alcohol, discussing important decisions with his wife, and taking her or their children to the hospital when necessary [P3 0732, 0742, 0747, 0824, 0841, 2586, 3432-3, 3790, 3990, 4000, 4002, 4011, 4018]. However, in practice few men live up to these characteristics of an ideal husband. Many women complain that their husbands do not (sufficiently) help them in the field, fail to generate money, spend income elsewhere, like women too much, or quarrel often.25

One possible explanation for men’s frequent failure to live up to their side of the ‘gender contract’ was already touched upon in the previous chapter. It may, on the one hand, have to do with the vanishing of many of men’s arguably most masculine tasks and a narrowing down of their responsibilities to a task that is increasingly hard to accomplish: income generation. On the other hand, possibly as another side of the same coin, the household’s increasing need for money and men’s relatively exclusive access to it has made men respected members of the community – whether or not they conform to their prescribed gender roles (Arnfred 2001: 172).

Although seldom explicitly verbalized by my informants, the following fragment shows that fertility too is considered an important feature of a good husband:

Amila (33, five children, second marriage) is married to a man who prefers to spend his income on cigarettes and batteries for his radio rather than food or other necessities for his family. Much of the work in her field is done by Amila alone as her husband often refuses to help her. Nonetheless, when I asked Amila whether she considered him a good husband, her first response was that he is good indeed, because he has given her many children. P3 3861]

According to Mitchell (1961: 50), among the Yao men were considered as “merely a cockerel who begets children for the matrilineal group”. In this light it is surprising that men’s reproductive qualities26 were so rarely commented upon by my informants. The features of a good husband mentioned most by my informants – build a house, help in the field, and provide money for other necessities – function to facilitate a woman’s efforts in raising her children. Possibly, the fact that these

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24 As discussed in Chapter 2, Yao Muslims adopted only a “veneer layer” of Islam (Rangeley 1963: 25). Most do not abstain from alcohol.
25 In Chapter 5 on sexual relationships I will discuss under which conditions and circumstances these complaints may or may not lead women to instigate divorce.
26 A man’s failure to reproduce is not insurmountable, however. In the past at least a stand-in, called ‘fisi’, could in such cases be hired to do the job (Ibik 1970: 18, White et al. 2005: 30).
are mentioned rather than procreation itself stems from the fact that these tasks, contrary to impregnation, are often avoided by Mudzi women’s husbands.

When Mudzi men and women perform a task traditionally assigned to the opposite sex – a married man fetching water [P3 0854] or a woman constructing a fence [P3 0976], they are ridiculed or scolded by their fellow villagers27 (see also Manda nd). As seems to have been the case throughout Bantu history, men and women have fairly separate life-worlds, and different social roles [see e.g. P3 3196-7, 3203-4, 3260]. Extensive interaction between members of the opposite sex is rare, and contact between men and women remains formal, even within marriage. This ‘separateness’ may be exemplified by the fact that whatever community meeting I would attend throughout the country when still employed at ICRISAT, men and women always sat in two different groups (see also Aguilar & Birch de Aguilar 1993). It has been argued that Malawians’ general aversion to deviating from such behavioural gender norms stems from a deep-rooted fear that this will upset the ancestor spirits and so bring about misfortune (e.g. Manda nd). It may have been reinforced by the binary (hierarchical) gender ideology that Banda so vigorously promoted (see Chapter 2). My data furthermore suggest that both men and women seem to feel they have something to gain by upholding the prevalent ‘gender contract’. Men prefer women to remain responsible for working the land and preparing their daily meals, while women prefer men to struggle to find cash – a point to which I return further on.

It is generally said, by social scientists, policy makers, and Mudzi villagers alike, that men have greater access to money than women. This is one of the assumptions underlying the transactional sex paradigm, the validity of which is assessed in this study. Throughout this book I will argue that this claim is, at least to some extent, upheld and emphasized by women to put to their advantage. In the following I assess Mudzi men’s actual access to income.

27 Despite the fairly strict gender contract, it seems that in some cases a gender-specific responsibility can be shifted into the realm of the other sex, as suggested by the following. It puzzled me that most women were willing to have their maize ground at the fuel-generated mill at a cost, while money is so scarce and the grinding can be done by hand too. Similar other technologies introduced to lighten women’s labour burden and more generally improve livelihood security have often not taken up by the women. This was the case, for example, with the clay cooking stoves that Mudzi women were taught to handcraft by an NGO during our fieldwork period. The stoves significantly reduced the amount of firewood needed for cooking, yet none of the women used the stove more than a few times. The reasons they gave when I inquired were little enlightening. Most just shrugged their shoulders, mumbling that they had had no time to grab the stove this time, but might do so another day. Improved technologies developed by agricultural scientists are another example, as these are rarely adopted by the poor small-scale farmers intended to benefit from them. The reason that one Mudzi women gave for this concerned the importance attached to upholding and passing on the practices of the ancestors [P3 2674]. Nevertheless, when the first maize mills were introduced, women were en masse willing to give up their old ways and even pay for the new service [P3 1123]. A possible explanation for this may be found in the fact that by doing so, they shifted the task of grinding from the women’s domain of food production to men’s domain of money. Women are still the ones to carry the maize back and forth to the mill, but the money needed for grinding can be demanded from men.
• Male access to money
As discussed in the previous chapter, since the colonial era men have been privileged in their access to education and waged labour. Nonetheless, in an underdeveloped economy like Malawi’s, jobs are hard to come by even for men. As mentioned, a number of Mudzi men have migrated to South Africa in search of employment. They tend to be very secretive about the work they do abroad [P2 1635; P3 0364, 2862, 4019], leading Mudzi villagers to assume that their tasks are dirty or dumb, and most likely both. Only one migrant was open about his activities, sending regular photographs of himself in full attire at the fuel station where he works as filling attendant – clearly a job to be proud of.

The few Mudzi-based men who are employed outside the village work as gate-men (guards), builders, or teachers. Their salaries are small although still substantial in village terms, but tend to be paid irregularly. Formal minimum wage for day labourers in Malawi is 100 MK. A gate-man makes about 3000 MK a month, a builder is only paid when certain stages of the work have been accomplished, and a primary school teacher may earn up to 10,000 MK. The majority of men has no steady employment and tries to access the money that circulates in their direct surroundings through self-employment. Some of the young, able-bodied men who possess bikes at times cycle over thirty kilometres to the nearest lakeshore to buy fresh fish, which they sell on their way back, and in and around Mudzi. Two elderly men make mats, one has a bicycle repair shop, one makes shoes, another makes hoes, and one has a mini-grocery store. All of them are in business only on and off, as they need (and do not always have) investment money to purchase the necessary materials or merchandise. Many men hire out their labour on a piecemeal basis to work on other farmers’ fields when money is needed and such labour is in demand. As mentioned, some have their own plot of land on which mainly cotton is grown for sale. Examples abound, however, of husbands who disappeared with the revenue of their cotton (sometimes grown together with their wives), only to show up again days later without any money left [P3 0550, 0608, 2791, 2943–4, 2951, 2999–3000, 3088–93, 3310–1, 3377–8, 3468–9, 3613, 3766, 4018]. In sum, most Mudzi husbands have no regular income at their disposal, and when they have money they are not always willing to invest it in their (often temporary and thus always insecure) marital relationship.

28 Today few girls in Mudzi attend school, but boys seem to go even less. I have not thoroughly investigated this point, and base this estimation on a series of photographs that I took at the primary school nearest to Mudzi, which shows significantly more girls than boys per class. Several adolescent Mudzi girls were discouraged from attending school by their caretakers, who feared that the girls would end up pregnant and felt that the girls’ future would be more secure if they focussed on finding a proper husband instead [P2 1744, 2030, 2042; P3 1196].
29 Equivalent to half a Euro at the time of the research.
30 Equivalent to approximately 15 Euro at the time of the research.
31 Equivalent to approximately 50 Euro at the time of the research.
“As head he must provide” – women’s power(ful) discourse

In Chapter 1, I brought forward a ‘new’ matrilineal puzzle. This puzzle concerns the seeming contradiction between the relatively strong livelihood base of women in matrilineal and matrilocal communities and their claim to need male support. Part of this puzzle is the discrepancy between the apparent power balance in the traditional gender contract, and women’s persistent discourse on male superiority. Throughout Africa, scholars have noted women’s ostentatious display of deference to men.

Mudzi women repetitively emphasized that men are in general stronger, braver, and smarter than women [P3 2344, 3160, 3173, 3182, 3186, 3282, 3407–9, 3578, 3603, 3624, 3635, 3671, 3860, 3864]. Invariably, women described their husbands as the akulu

32 The mini-grocery store is run by the (long-term) husband of Jasmine (57). He generally does not share his income with her, but does live on the foods from her field, which he helps to cultivate. His wife and live-in adult daughter both complain that he just sits on his money. They do not know what he spends it on. At any rate, his sales are sporadic and his profit can only be marginal.

33 Although infrequently, women at times also voiced condescending remarks about men, as did as Mery (74, widowed): “Ah, women are more intelligent! They stay at home, cook, and are satisfied. They just work hard in their fields, meanwhile trying to guide their husbands on what to do. While men just do things without thinking, they are all over the place, moving around, only thinking about drinking beer. When a woman advises him, he just says: ‘Don’t tell me what to do! I know everything!’ That’s why so many women in Mudzi are not married even though they are being proposed to!” [P3 3610–3].
(the elder) or mutu wa banja (head of the family) [P3 0529, 0746, 3191, 3249–50, 3286, 3670]. As a sign of respect to their husband, women kneel down when speaking or listening to him. Conversely, this is not expected of men addressing their wife (they do kneel or squat when interacting with someone higher up in the formal hierarchy, e.g. an elderly man or woman).

Although a woman’s kneeling when formally addressing her husband may seem a clear indication of her subordinate social position, this need not necessarily be interpreted so. As several anthropologists have pointed out, women’s performative subservience is in many African societies “a façade hiding a considerable degree of equality between the sexes” (Baerends 1994: 17). Writing about the matrilineal Kwahu in Ghana, Van der Geest (1975) argues that both women and men subscribe to a portrayal of female subordination and male superiority in ‘exchange’ for women’s private powerful position and men’s lack of power over their wives and children. Audrey Richards (1969 [1940]: 92), who studied the matrilineal Bemba of Northern Rhodesia (now Zambia) in the 1930s, wittily reverses the perspective, and so helps to better comprehend the confusing coexistence of women’s submissive appearance with their actual position of power:

A Native of this tribe would probably have been astonished to see a Victorian gentleman pick up his wife’s handkerchief when she had let it fall, allow her to pass first through the door and serve her first at meals, when he might have discovered that the same husband was an undisputed patriarch in his home and the sole legal guardian of the children, and that his wife was entirely dependent economically upon him. How inconsistent, he might have argued, to combine a rather extreme form of patriarchal authority with an outward show of giving precedence to the wife.

The outward show, then, may be interpreted as a normative form of courtesy from the more towards the less powerful. In Malawi, politeness and respect indeed continue to be highly valued, not only between generations and sexes, but in all social interactions. This high value attached to politeness could support the hypothesis that deference towards the weaker-positioned sex functions to compensate otherwise demeaning displays of dominance. However, concluding from this that Malawian women are thus the stronger sex too would be misleading. As I will try to make clear throughout this book, the power balance between the men and women of Mudzi is complex and multi-layered, with neither sex holding the ultimate power. Both men and women have something to offer that the opposite

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34 Interestingly, in ChiChewa the same metaphor is used as in English. Mutu literally refers to the corporeal head of a human body. It would be worth investigating whether the term was adopted from the English colonialists or missionaries, who, as discussed in Chapter 2, introduced patriarchal ideas about domestic gender roles.


36 According to Richards the Yao of Malawi and the Bemba of Zambia have comparable kinship and marriage systems (Richards 1967 [1950]: 230).
sex needs, but individual husbands and wives can be relatively easily replaced, diluting the negotiating power of each group.

Looking more closely at Mudzi women’s comments gives some indications to what they may try to imply by insisting that men are stronger, braver, and smarter. Often, such statements form part of the explanations given about why men are more successful at generating money [e.g. P3 2344, 3173, 3182, 3282, 3407–9, 3578, 3603, 3860]. To the discourse on natural male superiority some women added that men are also socially and culturally better positioned to earn money. They are, for example, more likely to finish school while girls tend to get pregnant and drop out [P3 3869], and can move around freely while women must remain near their compound to look after the children [P3 3050, 3434-5]. The following quotes suggest that it is this task of the husband to provide for the household that grants him a formal position of authority:

Christina (34): “By nature a husband is the head of the family, so we listen to him. Women who are married depend on their husbands, for example when you lack salt, you can tell your husband. Even during hunger season you tell him that the maize flour has finished.” [P3 3249–50, see also 3288]

Agnessi (42): “We find money together but women don’t have power or responsibility, men are the ones who have got responsibility. They protect it [the money] as head of the family because they buy everything that is needed at home.” [P3 3466–7]

As a matter of fact, Agnessi’s comment is in stark contrast with the reality of daily life. Indeed, as noted by Agnessi, and further elaborated upon in Chapter 8, not only men, but women too, have means to generate money. But unlike Agnessi’s statement, men and women tend to keep their incomes strictly separate. Furthermore, the “things needed at home” that Agnessi refers to are in practice more often bought by women themselves than by their husbands. The claim that men, as household heads, guard all money and pay all household expenses simply does not hold. Rather than reflecting common practice, women’s discourse on male superiority reflects prevalent gender norms (whether or not these are age-old, or have been shaped through time by external patriarchal influences, as discussed in the previous chapter). It could be hypothesized that women’s persistent reproduction of the norm is, consciously or not, a means to an end. By positioning men as (best suited as) household head, women can hold them responsible for providing and claim support from them. Women, they feel themselves, should not have to generate money. They should instead find a husband to do this for them. As Saida (aged 28) explained: “We women don’t like to do ganyu, [we are] thinking: ‘No, we have a husband for that.’ That’s how it is in village life…” [P3 3646, also P3 3242–4, 3860]. It seems that the responsibility for generating money is, although not always successfully, preferably put on men’s shoulders.

Although a husband is supposed to provide for his wife and children, it is not taken for granted that he does so wholeheartedly, as his loyalties and affections are likely to lie with his matrikin in the village where he grew up. Women’s carefully
deferent attitude towards men may therefore also stem from a sense of gratitude for what is perceived as a man’s self-sacrificing, having abandoned his home and kin to help a non-related woman [e.g. P3 3205–6] (see also Drews 1991: 90). It might be argued that particularly women in matrilineally and matrilocally organized communities have reason to fervently reproduce and emphasize the cultural script that a husband must provide material and physical support. After all, it is her household that needs money, her compound that needs maintenance, and her field that needs clearance – rather than his or even theirs. As the marriage bond is generally fragile and insecure, a man can never be certain to pick the future fruits of his investment. A man’s commitment to investing in his partner’s household is therefore highly appreciated as a sign of his seriousness about their relationship. In the next chapter I further elaborate on men’s material care as both expression of and prerequisite for emotional attachment.

Another factor leading women to generally treasure their husband may be men’s relative scarcity. In Mudzi women outnumber men, as can be concluded from the fact that all men in Mudzi have a wife, while about one-third of the female population does not have a husband [P3 2957, 3127–8, 3426]. Some informants suggested that the scarcity of men results from a different birth ratio [P3 0307, 3490–1]. More likely, however, the unequal ratio of men and women is related to extensive male outmigration to find waged labour in towns, on estates, or abroad. The imbalance has led to severe competition among women over men [P2 0028–9, 0320, 0867, 1208, 1408–9, 1895, 1901, 1908, 1940; P3 1139, 1160, 1563, 3495–8, 3817, 4104]. Rivalling over (potential) husbands, women generally feel little loyalty towards their fellow village women [P2 0867, 1529–30, 1894, 1940; P3 2761]. “Men,” one female informant stated, “only belong to their mother, never to any wife” [P2 1894]. As can be expected from this view, wives suffer competition not only from other (potential) partners of their husband, but also from his mother and sisters [P2 1146, 1152, 1161, 1490, 1706, 1714; P3 1505, 1759, 3976]. This competition becomes particularly visible when a man gains access to resources [P2 1152, 1161, 1706, 1714; P3 3976].

In sum, it may be in an attempt to tie a man to them and seduce him into supporting their household that women willingly subscribe to the ideology of male superiority. By paying due respect to their husband as ‘household head’, women can emphasize and try to capitalize on his normative role as provider. To what extent, or under which circumstances, this would be a conscious process I dare not say. I suspect that in many cases women just follow the behavioural norms they were taught and see practiced around them. Not doing so would lead to public scolding or covert disapproval from others, and reprisals from the ‘wronged’ husband. Nonetheless, some comments from Mudzi women (mentioned earlier in this chapter and presented in further chapters) suggest that they are well aware of the advantages attached to keeping men responsible for the arduous task of finding household money.
Conclusion

One important characteristic of Mudzi village is its predominantly matrilineal and matrilocal organization. The basic principles of this organizing system have remained essentially unaltered throughout time, although it is important to note that the practice has probably never strictly followed the norm – as goes for all human behaviour. Descent in Mudzi is generally traced via the female bloodline and loyalty continues to be felt most strongly towards the matrikin. Land is still largely in women’s hands, and the related responsibility to produce and prepare food remains an exclusively female right and obligation. Logically – considering the fact that women are tied to a specific location, most men still join their wife’s homestead after marriage (and leave again after divorce).

A strict division of duties and responsibilities between the sexes direct women and men towards a general preference to be married, so as to supplement to each other’s tasks and assets. An actual, positive link between marital status and livelihood security can, however, only be discerned in the cases of couples who have stayed together for a long time, indicating commitment from both husband and wife to each other and their household. Not often, however, do men diligently perform the tasks they are expected to as husbands. Despite the general assumption that men have greater access to money, few men in Mudzi actually manage to generate sufficient money on a regular basis or are motivated to do so. Nonetheless, women persistently hold on to a rhetoric of men’s responsibility – even their superior innate suitability – to provide for their households. As suggested, this may be a (direct or indirect, conscious or sub-conscious) attempt to pressure husbands into taking up this male duty.

The second main characteristic of Mudzi is its overall, high level of food and livelihood insecurity. The villagers are still largely dependent on homegrown food and cash crops – which is favourable to Mudzi women’s power base compared to that of women in more money-oriented settings, such as cities. Nonetheless, also in Mudzi access to money is essential for survival, as a result of multiple factors that have deteriorated Malawi’s agricultural productivity (discussed in the previous chapter).

The severe poverty of Mudzi villagers has influenced, not to say challenged, the data collection process of this study, as will be discussed in the next chapter on the research methodology. The dynamics of daily life in the village that I described in this chapter, however, also created opportunities for gaining unsolicited access to rich data, which will also be explained in the following chapter.
Knitting narratives: 
Research methodology

Introduction
To assess the validity and value of any research finding, knowledge of how exactly it was attained is a first requirement. In the case of this study, the data collection process has been far from straightforward. Because of these two reasons I feel it is justified to devote a full chapter to elaborating upon my research methodology.

The importance of methodological accounting became particularly clear to me when I began to notice that the various research methods I used led to divergent and even contradictory outcomes. My research results were apparently conditioned by the methods through which they were collected. This was obviously frustrating and problematic, yet at the same time informative, as will be explained further on. To enhance the accuracy of my findings I switched between and combined different methods, ‘triangulating’ my data. Some of the methods I applied intentionally while others developed spontaneously. In this chapter I discuss each of the methods used, as well as other factors that have been of relevance to the process of data collection and analysis.

The lack of a predetermined structure that characterizes this study’s data collection process was intentional, at least to some extent. I did not want to restrict my investigation to the topics that I presumed were potentially related to my research question, rightfully fearing that this would lead me to miss out on important but unexpected explanatory factors. Instead I wanted to grasp as fully as possible all of women’s daily life considerations, in order to be able to frame their sexual choices within the appropriate wider context. Although the direction of the research was instigated by a clear hypothesis to be tested, I had no particular set of

1 An example of such triangulation already appeared in the previous chapter, where I described how I combined qualitative and quantitative data to categorize Mudzi households based on their relative position on the poverty spectrum.
Theories in mind to guide the data collection process. In the social sciences, such an approach is called ‘grounded research’ – meaning that theory is formed during and through the analysis of field data and relevant literature (Glaser & Strauss 1967).

To allow for such a holistic point of departure, I opted for a classical ethnographic case-study approach. According to Robert Yin (2003) the case study approach is particularly suited for studying complex, contemporary social phenomena that cannot be easily distinguished from their real-life context. The interaction between livelihood insecurity and sexual relationship choices may well be considered such a phenomenon. By restricting the study of complex, interwoven phenomena to a bounded case, it becomes manageable. In this study, the ‘case’ is one particular village community that I have called Mudzi. The classical ethnographic aspect of my case study approach entailed living among the research population for an extended period of time, building rapport through informal interaction and participation in everyday activities, and so gaining insights into the overall daily lives of those under study. By making these choices, I traded off generalizability to in-depth thoroughness, efficiency to inclusiveness, orderliness to flexibility, systemacity to serendipity. I did not anticipate the hardship that came with this endeavour, which required surrendering to methodological uncertainty and full submersion into a tough field but on hindsight I believe it has been worthwhile.

The harsh living circumstances in Mudzi, described in the previous chapter, led to a precarious research situation. Studying a population in crisis, or on the edge of survival, triggers ethical doubts, feelings of guilt and shame, and internal conflicts about longing to help while also wishing to understand how life is usually lived without that help. The fact that I embodied potential help and hope further complicated things. Villagers shrewdly attempted to gain support through me by (over)emphasizing their deprivation and enviously competing with each other over my attention, keeping a close watch on my every step and especially anything that might reveal the privileging of another villager (e.g. P2 0155, 1206, 1227, 1475, 1637).

In its most radical form, grounded research is not preceded by any hypothesis or literature review. As described in Chapter 1, this does not apply to my research. Nonetheless, my choice to let the fieldwork (to a certain extent) ‘take its own course’ instead of departing from well-defined theoretical and methodological frameworks, makes it appropriate to use the classification ‘grounded.’

I had done similar fieldwork before in Guatemala, where I spent six months living in a small village community to conduct ethnographic research. However, for reasons discussed in this chapter, I experienced the fieldwork in Malawi to be much more taxing.

An example of this is the Mudzi woman who during our fieldwork gave birth to twins. Soon after this, she was left by the babies’ father. The woman’s breasts were clearly too empty to feed both babies properly. I found it very difficult to refrain from helping this woman by buying her some cans of milk powder. Other women must have noted my temptation and were very explicit about its repercussions, threatening that they would all come to demand support if I would help this one mother, as they all had babies and they all suffered [P2 1206, 1227]. And they were quite right at that. It would have been unethical, not to mention jeopardized my position, to help only some while not others. Eventually I did find ways to assist some women that I pitied in particular, including these twins’ mother among others, by paying them to help us fetch or cut firewood, or recruiting them as research assistants (see Chapter 7).
These factors called for inventive research methods and constant caution about safeguarding my position as an independent researcher equally interested in all but without intention or means to actually help all. The harsh living circumstances furthermore challenged my study results simply because part of my energy too was directed at mere survival.

A significant role in the data collection process was played by my research assistant Gertrude Finyiza, a young Malawian woman who responded to the job advertisement I placed in one of the national newspapers. She turned out to be much more than the Yao translator and housekeeper that I was looking for, assisting me also as a cultural broker, data collector, and friend. More than I, a white foreigner unaccustomed to most of what our informants considered normal, she became an entrusted and valued ‘fellow villager’, who always managed to uphold a balance between assimilating with the community and maintaining a detached position as researcher. Her ‘insider’ stories about what had been discussed at the water pump or by villagers coming by for a chat with her, the conversations of the many women that eventually joined me in being taught how to knit by Gertrude, and her reflection upon what occurred around us have all been of invaluable help to my understanding of Mudzi life. In this chapter I therefore also elaborate upon Gertrude and her indispensable role in this study. Whether or not to include the casual remarks that villagers made to Gertrude, some of which may have been intended as confidential, into my data set obviously led to ethical deliberations, which too are discussed in this chapter.

Research approach

Public health research, including that related to HIV and AIDS, continues to rely heavily on survey-based methods for data collection. These methods have clear advantages over qualitative research, such as the already mentioned efficiency and potential for large scale, but also the relatively easy analysis of (numerical and comparable) data (see also Carvalho & White 1997, Scrimshaw 1990). However, as argued by many other social scientists, in Mudzi I found that quantitative data on its own, without sufficient contextualization and triangulation, was inadequate for obtaining a reasonably representative impression of (an aspect of) village life.

In this section I describe the study’s data collection process, including the problems we encountered with structured interviews, our attempts to overcome these, and the leaps of faith that together shaped my research methodology.

I have often clarified my research purposes in Mudzi, repeatedly verified villagers’ willingness to participate, stressed that they were free not to answer our questions,

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6 By ‘structured’ I mean that the same set of questions was asked of each interviewee (as Bennett & George 1997: 3).
and asked permission to use their photographs in the final research report. Yet I am quite sure that most Mudzi villagers have no means to fully understand what they consented to (see also Zaman & Nahar 2011: 154). Many might still agree if they did know what exactly their permission entailed – they might care less that their names and faces would be circulated among a small group of academics far away, while others might even feel proud about it (see also Van der Geest 2011: 148). Nevertheless I consider it right to safeguard their privacy by changing all names, including that of the village itself, and to not link names to the pictures that I use. Further personal information of informants, such as age, marital status, and number of children, has mostly been left unaltered. Only in a few cases, when recognition would be possible on the basis of some unique details, have I changed such details to protect the privacy of the person(s) in question.

Moving to the village

Before Gertrude and I settled in Mudzi, I undertook two village-level studies commissioned by ICRISAT concerning farmers’ adoption of one of its improved groundnut varieties. My supervisors at the institute felt uncomfortable with me staying overnight in localities without facilities that were close to middle-class, urban standards, and, after many attempts to persuade them, agreed only if my expeditions did not take longer than one week at a time. In total I spent six weeks in the two villages, one in central Malawi, the other in the deep south. These studies allowed me to acquaint myself with village life and so functioned as a pilot study for the longer-term research in Mudzi.

In the two pilot study villages I lived with a family and could observe the daily life routines within a household – something I was not able to witness as up-close and personal during my stay in Mudzi. Despite the privilege of being part of a family, I found it taxing to constantly be at the whim and mercy of others. In Mudzi, I therefore requested and was allocated a private house for Gertrude and me by the Group Village Headwoman, on the border between Mudzi A and B, next to the path connecting the two villages. The house, which belonged to the Group Village Head’s son now working in South Africa, was one of the better-looking houses in the village: relatively big, divided into four rooms with half-high walls, and with an iron-sheet roof. One of the rooms had been used to lock up the goats at night, and it took quite some time before we got rid of the smell. In this room we stored our pots and hoes. Gertrude and I both had our own separate bedroom.8

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7 As I describe further on, during the three years prior to undertaking this PhD study I worked in Malawi as a social scientist at the International Crops Research Institute for the Semi-Arid Tropics (ICRISAT).

8 I had intended to be sleeping on a bamboo mat, just like most villagers. To my relief, however, I found a bed standing in the otherwise empty house. Only when guests came to visit (several curious, in-country expat friends, and advisor Sjaak van der Geest), did I take out my bamboo mat to sleep on.
were supplied with a table and two chairs, and I had brought a cupboard that could be locked to safeguard our belongings – these filled the fourth space.

Like most houses ours had a veranda in front, and two separate little structures behind it. One contained firewood and three stones to cook on, the other many insects and a mere hole in the ground – our pit-latrine. In front of this latrine a grass fence was put up, behind which we washed ourselves.

None of the houses in Mudzi had running water or electricity. Gertrude went to fetch water at the water pump almost daily; I joined her only occasionally – for reasons to be explained later. To charge my mobile phone and the small laptop I brought for data storage, I installed a solar panel on our roof. Despite the many hours in full sunlight, it took about two days of charging to have the laptop running for two hours. Most of our data are therefore handwritten. Towards the end of the fieldwork period I hired an assistant to enter Gertrude’s and my journal entries into the computer.

I paid the Group Village Headwoman a monthly rent of 2000 Kwacha, almost 10 Euros at the time. For this price we also had access to some of the land around the house, on which we planted maize, pumpkins, peas, groundnuts, and sweet potatoes. After some time in the village, I ordered the local bike mechanic to make
us two bicycles from the parts he had laying around, which took him some time because he did not have enough parts for two full bicycles and needed to travel to Balaka several times for extra parts. But when he had finally managed to assemble the bikes, we spent our time more efficiently as it took less time to visit far-away households, the markets and clinics in the area, and even Balaka (a good two-hour, bumpy ride).

My arrival in Mudzi stirred up quite some commotion, of which I only came aware later. It made the Group Village Headwoman and the Village Heads of Mudzi A and B nervous because they felt responsible for our safety while fearing that the presence of a mzungu in a simple, unprotected house would surely attract malevolent attention [P3 0256]. Also lay villagers worried that my presence would attract thieves to their community [P2 0754]. Only upon our departure did the Group Village Headwoman tell us that she had been called twice to the sub-Traditional Authority (one rank above her on the hierarchical ladder) to justify her acceptance of my presence, because she should know that azungu are notorious for blood stealing [P3 2848]. Other villagers too were scared that I had come to steal their blood [P3 0572, 2360]. Not surprisingly then, several asked Gertrude if she was not afraid to share a house with me, and whether it caused her nightmares to sleep so near to me [P2 2071]. A number of young children burst into tears each time they saw me, making me suspect that their parents used me as a bogeyman in their child-raising endeavours.

As time went by, the initial anxiety calmed down, until eventually, towards the end of our fieldwork, women began to worry about our upcoming departure, wondering out loud what they were to do with their afternoons if they could no longer come to chat, knit, or play a bawo game at our house [P3 0890, 1425, 1740, 1923].

**Trial and error data collection**

The first mistake I made when starting my life in Mudzi village was to come in an impressive four-wheel-drive car with the ICRISAT logo on its doors. After this it did not matter how often I emphasized that I was sent NOT to start up a project but merely to understand what daily life in a Malawian village entails. The simple fact that I was connected to an organization made many villagers believe that one day I would confess that I had tricked them about my neutrality so as to spy on who really deserved support and who not, and help those identified as needy [e.g. P2 0071; P3 0537, 0557, 1019, 1532, 1936]. They hoped and expected that I would bring them maize during the hunger season, fertilizer at planting time, and blankets during the cold season. But I disappointed them time and again. Some argued among each other,

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9 A Swahili word originally meaning ‘someone who wanders around aimlessly’, now also in Malawi widely used to denote white foreigners. Plural: *azungu*. 
Gertrude overheard, that I had indeed emphasized from the beginning that I would not come with handouts or start a project [P2 1206, 1227; P3 2487]. Yet they all found it difficult to understand why on earth I would give up my surely comfortable life to suffer with them, asking them so many questions about their impoverished lives if it were not for some form of aid [P2 0071; P3 0537, 0557, 1532]. This suspicion logically influenced the image that my respondents wanted to create of themselves.

It took some time before I noticed the discrepancy between the answers I got during my interviews and what I observed. After I was granted permission by the District Commissioner, the Group Village Head, and Village Heads to undertake my study in Mudzi, I requested all inhabitants to be gathered. I had written and learned by heart a full speech in ChiChewa, in which I explained my intentions and thanked them beforehand for their hospitality. I was not specific about my research focus on women’s motivations for (risky) sexual relationships, as I anticipated that this delicate issue would scare off potential informants, and might stir up gossip about those willing to talk to me. Instead I broadly explained that I wanted to understand daily life in a Malawian village – which was indeed my intention, as noted earlier, so as to contextualize women’s sexual choices. I warned the villagers that I would be asking many questions, because life here would be very different from what I was used to, and I stressed that they were at all times free not to answer. No one ever objected to answering though. But their answers, as I found later, were often tactical rather than truthful.

I had intended to develop a quantitative database, with a number of demographic details on all the adult women in Mudzi village, which I would then supplement with information gathered throughout the research period. Hence, Gertrude and I started out with a basic set of questions for each woman on issues like her age, marital history, size of household, size of land, amount of maize stored (see Appendix 2 for full list of questions). At several occasions throughout the year we visited all households again to ask questions related to that specific period. For example at planting time we passed through the village asking all women what they were planting, how they had accessed the seeds, et cetera. I then used the opportunity to also ask them what they had been eating the previous day, since this was the hunger season. If they answered they had eaten porridge or *nsima*, we would ask about the source of the maize, and if bought, the source of the money to buy it with.

The first interesting point revealed by the baseline interviews was that the total number of households in Mudzi A and B was substantially smaller than officially registered. Based on the official household list that I received through the District Commissioner I had expected to find 74 households in Mudzi A, and an approximately equal number of adult women. However, when passing by all the houses I encountered no more than 37. As discussed in Chapter 3, I solved this reduction in number of respondents by adding Mudzi B to my sample, of approximately the same size. Both villages had until recently been parts of the
same village, are adjacent, and to this day share one water pump and one graveyard. The inhabitants of Mudzi B were relieved that they were included in whatever project or handouts might come from my presence, while those of Mudzi A seemed disappointed that they now had to share whatever was coming.

Another early mistake I made was not to bother the Group Village Headwoman with my list of questions – which I did out of respect. On hindsight the correct sign of respect would have been to interview her before anyone else. My negligence led to anxiety among the other villagers [e.g. P3 1434], who feared the anger of the Group Village Head. Several therefore came to beg me to interview her too, or ‘register’ as they called it. I then duly did so, elaborately apologizing for my delay in approaching her, and she seemed pleased. According to the answers that she gave, she should be classified as one of the poorest members of the village, with barely any land or food stores. In the days after this interview the Group Village Head sent relatives from other villages to ‘register’ with me too. I was left little choice but to ask them the same set of questions that I had posed to all Mudzi women, as always preceded by an explanation about the purpose of the interview. In this introduction I explicitly emphasized that there would be no future benefit in it for them, that I merely hoped for their willingness to assist me in helping me understand village life.

One likely explanation for the initial eagerness to be interviewed was that everybody soon heard about the small gifts I had brought to our first interviews. As a token of my appreciation of their time and patience I gave each interviewee a 500-gram bag of salt and a bar of soap after the baseline interview. Gifting to respondents is frowned upon by some social scientists, who feel that this ‘buying of answers’ could compromise the authenticity and reliability of data by encouraging informants to tell the researcher what they think he or she wants to hear (Weinreb et al. 1998: 10–11). I found it ethically immoral, however, to extract personal information from respondents for a cause that is unlikely to ever benefit them directly. I surely hope that my data and analyses will somehow contribute to improve the relevance and effectiveness of development interventions. Realistically, however, the impacts of this one individual study will be minimal at best, and most likely not be directed specifically at my informants. Rather, the one to benefit most from this study is me, as it offered me much desired insights on poverty dynamics at the grassroots level, and will further my academic career (and, as a matter of fact, that of Gertrude). To balance the scale somewhat in favour of my informants, and reciprocate for the insights I received from them, I decided to give gifts – which seems to have been the right choice as it was deeply appreciated [e.g. P2 0259–60; P3 2848–9], lowered suspicion about my intentions, and eased my discomfort about bothering villagers with my questions.10

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10 See Bleek (1979) for a reflect on on the dubiousness and difficulties of conducting fieldwork, and particularly so-called participant observation, when great social and economic inequality exists between the anthropologist and his or her research population.
The salt and soap gifts were probably one incentive for the Group Village Head and her relatives from outside of Mudzi village to insist on being interviewed. The other likely reason is revealed by their use of the word ‘registration’. To participate in projects or receive handouts, such as the subsidized fertilizer coupons distributed by the government, beneficiaries are usually first registered. To be sure not to miss out on a possible project or handouts that might follow from my enquiries, everybody wanted to be ‘registered’ by me.11

I entered the quantitative data collected through the interviews in an Excel spreadsheet for easy reference and comparison. The first time that I noticed we had been given incorrect information was when our neighbour told Gertrude that she was off to feed her pigs. During the interview, just a few days earlier, she had however claimed not to own any livestock [P3 0539]. I then corrected her answer in my Excel sheet. But when similar cases kept occurring I realized that I should not erase the incorrect information we were given at first, because it could actually be of interest to note on which topics the women were hiding or twisting the truth, and how. As Bleek (1987b) has argued in an article on lying informants: when people lie, it means that something important is at stake.

Bit by bit I came to understand that asking questions is generally considered impertinent, experienced as intrusive, and unlikely to yield useful results [e.g. P2 1262, 1602, 1887; P3 0254, 1224, 1227, 1509, 2497, 2525, 2544]. At the rare occasions that I would overhear someone asking a fellow villager a direct, personal question, the response was often a reprimand or evading answer [see also P3 1837]. Throughout each interview I could see Gertrude get more and more uncomfortable, and increasingly apologetic for the many questions we were asking [e.g. P3 0966, 2109, 1509]. This aversion against inquisitiveness – further analysed in Chapter 7 – combined with the assumption that there was something to gain from overstating their destitution, led to a largely untrustworthy database [P2 1227, 2078]. I suspect that women’s tactical answering was not only individually intentional, but often also the result of social pressure [e.g. P3 1936]. The community as a whole, and the Group Village Head in particular, would benefit from an impoverished and urgently-in-need image, to attract aid agents, development projects, and handouts.

11 For a Group Village Head in particular it is beneficial to have large numbers of people registered as village inhabitants. External aid providers generally assume that chiefs know best whom among their subjects are in most dire need of support, often leading them to have handouts distributed by the chiefs. Hence, the more registrants per chief, the more handouts this chief receives. As in the tributary system of the pre-colonial days, chiefs are locally entitled to redistribute the items among themselves and their followers as they see fit. Notably, a distribution considered strategic by a chief does not necessarily match the intended distribution of the aid provider.
The untruthful elements in the answers could in some cases be revealed through observation [e.g. P3 0539, 0975]. An example of this was the claim of one woman that she and her family were only eating mangoes at that time because they lacked maize. Gertrude and I saw her young daughters walk to the water pump each day, however, with piles of dirty pots and plates on their heads to wash [P3 1012]. At least eight women during the interviews claimed not to grow cotton for sale, yet were spotted planting, spraying, weeding, or harvesting cotton on their field, and selling their produce. Separately interviewing two women from the same household also brought out dissimilarities in their answers [P3 0511, 0552, 0975, 4107]. Especially regarding the assets that the household owned (e.g. number of blankets and livestock), the size of the current maize stores, and external sources of support, women apparently felt reluctant to tell the truth during the formal interview.

Many other falsities were exposed by the women themselves when talking to Gertrude. They seemed to consider her more akin to them than to me, and so at times as one of them rather than an extension of me as researcher. On one of our first days in Mudzi a group of women joined Gertrude and me on our veranda, and after some time started chatting amongst themselves. One teasingly asked a pregnant woman why it had now happened to her twice that a man impregnated and then abandoned her before she even gave birth. The one who asked this was then reprimanded by an older woman, saying these issues should not be discussed in front of outsiders. It did not take long however, before Gertrude came to be considered more of an insider. Especially at the water pump – *the* place for gossiping – Gertrude was told or overheard many eye-opening stories that contradicted or supplemented the answers given during the formal interviews. Women seemed no longer uncomfortable discussing their ‘private’ village matters with Gertrude present (and, later, not in my presence either). Gertrude, in turn, apparently did not feel uncomfortable to pass on to me what she was told or overheard. When I once enquired about this, she mentioned that she felt my wish to understand village life and particularly women’s decision-making processes was sincere, and appreciated my commitment to this end. My ethical doubts about taking as data the confidentialities that she passed on to me are considered further on.

Increasingly, women visited our house to greet us and chat – with Gertrude rather than me because of the language barrier (and probably the larger socio-cultural distance in general). I was often present though, and at times deliberately joined in the conversation to make clear that I was informed about what they told Gertrude. At times, the women would explicitly instruct Gertrude to translate to me what they had just said, to make sure I understood, especially when they thought it was very funny. Exactly to what extent they knew that and cared about whether Gertrude communicated everything they said to me cannot be ascertained. What has become clear though, is that in an informal setting women did not seem to make a great effort to keep up the lies they told us during the formal interviews.
Our growing realization that the formal interviews did not result in reliable data was strengthened by the comments of a small group of women from another village, who one day walked past our house. They discussed among each other that if I had picked their village and interviewed them, they would surely lie about everything to enhance their chances of obtaining support [P3 0483, see also P2 1749, 2007–19; P3 2216, 2529]. I had to acknowledge that the interviews, while straightforward in their planning, execution, and analysis, were in this case not an effective way to gather information, at least not on topics concerning wealth and poverty status.

The answers to my (more qualitative) questions on women’s marital history did, however, seem relevant and useful. I suspect that many women did not give a complete list of past relationships, but their accounts of how their relationships had started and ended were insightful – even if some of them may have been beside the truth. The courting, marriage, and divorce stories of all Mudzi women gathered through the interviews gave me a basic understanding of relationships from which to interpret the gossip, events, and choices that we heard of throughout the research period.

The demographic database did have some advantages, however. It helped me to identify women in a specific situation whenever I looked for these for further enquiry. For example, when I wondered about the reasons some women might have to settle in their husband’s home village of instead of their own – as traditionally prescribed and still usually practiced, I could easily track down the women who had answered during the interview that they were born outside Mudzi.

It has provided me at least with a fairly complete set of reasonably reliable data on basic demographic givens from each Mudzi woman, such as (approximate) age, years of education, ethnic descent, religion, and house description. While the interviewing was thus not fully worthless, it did feel disruptive, unnatural, and uncomfortable. Instead of becoming more familiar, I sensed that the interviews enlarged the distance between me and the villagers, who looked apprehensive each time I appeared at their compounds with a notebook.

Johannes Fabian (1990) has argued against the assumption that informants (or anyone, for that matter) have readily discursive ‘information’ in their heads that

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12 In the quantitative social sciences, the reliability of scientific observations includes the extent to which they can be replicated (Scrimshaw 1990: 89). In anthropology, this aspect is considered unfeasible, if only because most of the variables under study cannot be controlled. Rather, reliability of anthropological data can only refer to the extent to which respondents’ answers are truthful (Van der Geest, pers. comm.). Reliability, then, can only be ascertained and ‘measured’ through thorough knowledge of the particular respondent and his or her context (Bleek 1987b).

13 The same was found by Bleek (1987b) during his study of (among other things) birth control and abortions in rural Ghana, Rahman (1999: 34) during his study of women and microcredit in rural Bangladesh, and Wamoyi et al. (2010: 5) during their study of transactional sex in rural Tanzania.
can be uttered whenever asked for it. Collecting data merely through questioning people about issues outside of their context is thus not only problematic because it may be culturally inappropriate and so cause unease, and allows for twisting and hiding the truth. It is also problematic because people often have not thought out beforehand how they think or feel about certain issues, and why exactly they do so (see also Pool 1989: 29–31). Producing on the spot a clear statement that precisely, or even roughly, covers and conveys what one vaguely feels (or would feel if one were to take all the time needed to deliberate over a certain issue) is an art that few human beings master. It can therefore not be expected that informants’ accounts are always (or even ever) reliable representations of a truth – even when the informant had no intention of purposefully twisting his or her truth. Instead of an informative approach to data collection, in which it is assumed that reliable data can be straightforwardly provided upon request, Fabian proposes a performative approach. In his idea of performative ethnography, a researcher should create opportunities to interact with informants on the basis of ‘coevalness’ (i.e. on equal terms), and let knowledge be shaped during such processes of interaction. ‘Performance’ here does not only refer to empirically observable movements, in the sense of a practice carried out in a particular place. A naturally flowing conversation can also be considered a performative act, in which a certain discourse is co-produced through an exchange of thoughts, reflections and revisions. I return to the issue of data production through performative conversations further on.

The problem of interviewing obviously not only exists as ‘wrong’ answers, but often also as ‘wrong’ questions. In order to get valid answers – hence information about the specific issue that the researcher intends to assess – careful selection, formulation, and framing of questions is crucial. And for this, sufficient knowledge about the particular research setting is required (see also Bleek 1987). For example, when I asked farmers which crop they harvest first after the hunger season they named an early-maturing groundnut variety, which I then took to be the crop that marked the end of njala, the hunger period. However, when I actually witnessed the end of the hunger season I noticed that instead of groundnuts, fresh maize cobs were the first to be picked from the fields and, either boiled or roasted, consumed with great fervour. Except for those individual cobs, however, the maize was...
not harvested, as it must remain in the field until the cobs have fully dried so that they can be stored and ground into maize flour. The first crop to be actually harvested were indeed those groundnuts, but by then people already been able to fill their stomachs with fresh maize cobs. The farmers had not intentionally tried to mislead me. I had simply made a wrong assumption and incorrectly formulated my question when trying to find out when and how the hunger season comes to an end. Even though I had lived in Malawi for three years before I moved to Mudzi, had extensively read the literature on sub-Saharan African poverty dynamics, and had made several short trips to villages targeted by ICRISAT projects, much of what I encountered when living in Mudzi I could not have imagined before. Consequently, I could not have formulated questions on these issues, and would never have found out about them if I had relied only on self-designed questionnaires.

Reluctant to continue the formal interviews as the main method of data collection, I intended to rely more on informal interactions that I felt were both more appropriate and more fruitful. These, however, are more difficult to bring about and direct. Instead of purposive planning so as to get instant answers on specific questions, I found myself at the mercy of the ‘flow’ of things. The village gossip and personal affairs that women confided to Gertrude were incredibly insightful, keeping us updated about the happenings in and around Mudzi, the topics considered interesting to discuss, and the various opinions about these happenings. Where possible, I tried to create opportunities for informal visits, such as buying tomatoes from a village woman, helping on another’s field, or asking to see or learn a certain craft – all reasons that were perceived as far less threatening than being approached with a written list of straightforward personal questions. Eventually I found that an ‘excuse’ for visiting was not even required, as a casual visit just to say hello was highly appreciated and often led to interesting, naturally flowing conversations. Although we thus let things around us take their own course as much as possible, Gertrude and I always tried to keep in mind and be particularly sensitive to the issues relevant for this study’s topic of interest. What we heard and observed around us – besides being data in their own right – were leads to further inquiry, which we followed up on whenever the opportunity occurred or could be created. Hence, our increasing resort to ‘free-wheeling’ should not be interpreted as “simply being there and passively watching what people are about” (Pelto 1970: 92). Even though we tried not to dictate the course of actions around us, our own actions were certainly guided by the ultimate goals of this study – namely unravelling the interrelations between livelihood (in)security and sexual decision making.
One important opportunity for informal interaction presented itself largely unplanned. After I had selected Gertrude to be my research assistant, she told me about her handicraft skills. Because I had long wanted to learn how to knit I was pleased to hear this, and decided to bring some knitting needles with me to Mudzi so that she could teach me. I deliberately brought some extra pairs, in case one of the village women would want to join us. In the late afternoons, when we had finished interviewing or visiting and I had written down my notes, Gertrude and I sat outside in the shade and knitted. As we appeared ‘not busy’, women felt free to come and sit with us and chat. It took some time before the first one dared to take up a pair of needles and try, but eventually more and more women and girls joined me in learning how to knit and crochet. The fact that I often had to ask Gertrude for help and made many mistakes may have helped them get over their initial shyness. During these knitting session I was as much of a ‘coeval’ to the visiting Mudzi women as I probably could have become. For the time being we were not hierarchically distanced because of our roles as researcher and researched, but joined in mutual enjoyment of the same leisure activity and pursuit of a shared goal. I had never expected that these informal classes would eventually lead to a group of 10 to 15 women and girls voluntarily gathering at our house practically each afternoon to knit, crochet and, most importantly, chat. Only when their field required the women’s attention at planting and harvest time, were Gertrude and I left to knit alone. Notably, the exact composition of the group was different almost every day. In total about 35 women and girls spent at least some afternoons with us in this way. The group of most regular visitors consisted of about 15 women. Most of the women who joined us were unmarried at the time, or had a husband who was away for a period of time (working in elsewhere in Malawi or in South Africa). Women who had a partner staying with them at the time tended not to join us or only briefly, soon running home again to see if he needed attending [e.g. P2 1503-4; P3 1609].
As can be expected, these daily gatherings were a great opportunity for the ‘performative’ conversing that I much prefer to ‘informative’ interviewing. As Fabian (1990: 18) puts it, “the ethnographer does not call the tune but plays along.” During the formal interviews I asked respondents to reflect on issues outside of their context, ‘out of the blue’ as far as the respondents were concerned, making it difficult for both them and me to get to the heart of a matter.16 During the knitting sessions, women brought up issues (opinions, jokes, complaints) that emerged more naturally from normal interaction – hence within a logical context. While the interviews evolved around topics that I had chosen, the conversations during the knitting sessions were directed by the interests of the women and girls themselves. If the group was big, there was usually

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16 Obviously, after a certain topic is introduced by an interviewer, a more-or-less naturally ‘performative’ conversation, in which there is ample opportunity to jointly ‘create’ insights, can still develop about that topic
a lot of joking and laughing, and gossiping about people not present. When there were only a few women, the conversations became more personal and intimate. I feel that the triangulation of 1) straightforward, factual data collection (although to some extent unreliable), with 2) informal, on-the-spot, and within-context-produced reflections of women on themselves and others, and 3) our own observations of village interactions gave me a good insight into the daily lives of the women of rural Mudzi.

Obviously, women’s informal narratives were also full of twisted truths, as revealed by the fact that various parties (or even the same party on different occasions) regularly told us or each other different versions of past events. Rather than trying to uncover what really happened, tempting as it may be and often was, I tried to focus on finding out what each party might have had to gain by telling their particular version. As remarked earlier, when people choose to lie, something important is apparently at stake.

Activities like fetching water, collecting firewood, and cultivating the land also helped me to better understand the women, by personally experiencing the physical hardship, repetitiveness, and social aspects of such tasks. These activities also helped to strengthen my bonding with them, as they generally appreciated that I was not afraid to get my hands dirty and my muscles tired [e.g. P2 0065–6; P3 1799]. When I managed to accomplish a certain task they seemed sincerely delighted. I did not undertake all household tasks each day though, to ensure sufficient time for writing down my elaborate field notes, but also not to be an interruptive factor at the normal water pump conversations. Letting Gertrude fetch water on her own usually led to more interesting new insights than when we went together.

Some of these pictures were taken by Gertrude, and others by villagers interested in operating my camera.

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17 Some of these pictures were taken by Gertrude, and others by villagers interested in operating my camera.
Besides the interviews, informal conversations, and participatory activities, merely living in the village and being around to observe life brought many unexpected insights too. I would never have imagined that women would join literacy classes when they were already able to read and write, hiding this skill by using their left hand. Or that many villagers, having just made it through months of struggling for (expensive) food, once their meagre maize harvest was in, would begin selling it for ridiculously low prices. Or husbands disappearing without a word when the hunger season set in, leaving their wives to cultivate the fields and take care of their children alone. And to then shamelessly return when the harvest was about to be brought in, with a small gift to appease their abandoned wives. Several of these women had during the knitting sessions foreseen this, and vowed not to take back the deserter if he dared to pull this trick. But when it came to be, each woman did. All the events and developments that I had not expected to occur worked to puzzle me, triggering me to delve deeper, and so helped me to eventually better understand village life dynamics.

‘Participant observation’ is the common term used to denote the most characteristic research method of anthropology, referring more or less to what I just described: taking part in the daily life routines of the population under study. Wolf Bleek\(^\text{18}\) (1987) has noted that this term is often misleading, as anthropologists are seldom able to actually take part in and observe the specific activities that they study. In my case living up to the term would have entailed engaging in sexual relationships, but more importantly – to come anywhere near to experiencing what Mudzi women go through – it would have entailed somehow getting rid of all my safety nets. The first requirement was beyond what I was prepared to undertake for this study, if it had been achievable at all. The second was utterly impossible. Rather, as Bleek (1987b: 315) remarks, “anthropological knowledge is predominantly based on what people say they do, not on what researchers see them doing.” Indeed, although through our (long) presence in Mudzi Gertrude and I witnessed many relevant contextualizing aspects to sexual

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\(^{18}\) As noted earlier this is a pseudonym of Sjaak van der Geest. See Van der Geest 2011: 146–7 for his reasons for using a pseudonym.
relationships, the major contribution of our participation in daily life was the access it offered to women’s spontaneous (rather than artificially induced) narratives.

I did not, however, manage to live in Mudzi full time during the one-year research period. In the beginning I still had certain responsibilities towards ICRISAT, e.g. meetings to attend and presentations to give. Furthermore, after three years in Malawi I had come to dearly miss home, family, and friends. Although at times it was possible to phone from and to Mudzi, often the network did not allow this, and even text messages often did not go or come through. The utter disconnectedness from my ‘former’ life, lack of contact with my home base, combined with heavy malaria prophylaxis and malnourishment, caused many sleepless nights, nightmares when I did sleep, and eventually mental distress. Although feeling guilty about it, I knew I could entrust essential parts of the data collection to Gertrude, so I left the village four times. During those times Gertrude took over the daily journal writing and as such kept track of what occurred in Mudzi while I was gone. Once I returned to the village I read her notes and discussed them with her in depth, which then generally led to important new leads to follow up (whenever an opportunity for this occurred or could be created).

Additional data: moving beyond the village

During the interviews several Mudzi women mentioned that they engaged in selling food (raw or processed) in times of financial need to find money. Such women, having their own means of generating income, might have different expectations from men and sexual relationships than women without an independent income, I hypothesized. To gain a greater understanding of the causes and consequences of women’s independent money making, we began looking for and talking to small-scale businesswomen selling their merchandise at one of the three markets in the Mudzi area. Only one of these (at what is called a ‘trading centre’ in Malawi, with permanent market structures and a small clinic, approximately five kilometres from Mudzi) is in operation all year round, while the other two (at approximately one and two kilometres away) are virtually non-existent during the lean season. In total we interviewed 30 market women (see Appendix 3 for the set of questions) on their business, marital, and child-bearing history to see if any pattern could be discerned regarding the relationship between income-generating activities and sexual choices. These data are discussed in Chapter 8.

Dutch readers may know Thea Beckman’s children’s novel Kruistocht in spijkerbroek, which has also been made into an English film under the title Crusade in jeans. During my time in Mudzi I at times felt like the main character of this story, who through an accident with a time machine is stranded in the 13th century. Nobody around him has a clue about the lifeworld he grew up in, moreover, that world no longer exists. Even though I could obviously go back to my own lifeworld, it often felt so out of touch that I experienced it as merely a vague memory that could not be shared with anyone around me.

When I stayed in one of the pilot villages during the hunger season, I had brought with me cookies and cereal bars, which I tried to eat at night without letting others hear it. I felt so awful doing this that I thereafter decided to go hungry along with the villagers.
Women with an official job and hence steady income would also have provided useful information to shed light on a potential link between livelihood security and sexual decision making. However, such women were hard to come by in and around Mudzi. I only managed to find and interview one young woman employed in a mini-shop in the largest market in Mudzi’s vicinity, and a nurse employed at the small hospital at this marketplace.

This nurse was also a relevant source of information on the sexual and health behaviour of people in the area. Both she and the chief nurse of the district hospital in Balaka gave me access to their monthly birth statistics of the past years, which allowed me to assess whether a significant difference exists between specific months in the number of births (and hence the occurrence of unprotected sex nine months earlier). The interesting results of this exercise are discussed in Chapter 5. Gertrude and I also had ourselves tested for HIV in the clinic offering Voluntary Counselling and Testing (VCT) services nearest Mudzi, to experience the setting and procedures, and we visited this clinic twice more to collect statistics on the number of positive and negative tests carried out among men and women.

Other interviews outside the villages were held with staff of the various development organizations active in Mudzi, both at their so-called field offices in Balaka town and at their national headquarters in Lilongwe. Although the insights gained through these meetings were interesting, they were not of sufficient relevance to the purpose of this book and are therefore not used directly.

In an attempt to gain insight into women’s management of their meagre resources I asked four Mudzi women to keep track of their daily incomes and expenditures for three and a half months. These financial diaries have been particularly relevant for illuminating how resources flow through the community and how women tactically invest in social relations. The findings from the diaries are more elaborately described and analysed in Chapter 7.
Language

The interviews were held in either ChiChewa, the national language of Malawi spoken by all but the oldest generation in Mudzi, or ChiYao with the elderly women. I had deliberately selected a research assistant who is fluent in both tongues. I had studied ChiChewa myself too, but in ChiYao I could only greet. During my earlier research in Guatemala I had not undertaken any interviews; all my data was gathered through informal conversations, which I believe greatly enhanced the reliability as well as local relevance of the data. This had however only been possible because I had sufficiently mastered Spanish, the mother tongue of all my informants. I aspired to accomplish the same with ChiChewa, and have studied it extensively. However, after the six-week pilot study, I realized that I had spent most of my time and energy merely trying to communicate. Spanish had been relatively easy to learn, being another European language with familiar grammar rules and recognizable words. ChiChewa was of a completely different order, without any correlation to the languages I had known so far. Each word completely alien, each sentence a complicated puzzle with an unfamiliar logic. I had to acknowledge that I had not been able to master this new language sufficiently to get to the level of mutual in-depth understanding necessary for ethnographic research. That is where Gertrude came in.

During the interviews we held in Mudzi I formulated some questions in ChiChewa, while others I posed in English and Gertrude would then translate. After some time she rarely had to translate the responses back to English, as I well understood what had been said. Spontaneous conversations were more difficult though, when I did not know the topic and therefore regularly missed the point. Some interviews were recorded and then transcribed by Gertrude and me together, to allow for in-depth exploration and discussion of what had been said and how. However, the various types of recording equipment I had brought not only often failed on me, but also increased the discomfort of the interviewee, leading me to increasingly leave the equipment at home [P3 0623, 2212, 3562]. Once transcribed, I usually had little difficulty disentangling the grammatical puzzles and understanding the meaning of the statements. So while I have unfortunately missed many literal quotes – lost in translation especially in the case of informal chats, there were many others that I could follow literally and interpret personally. The transcriptions of the interviews showed Gertrude’s translations to be usually very literal, converting the exact words used rather than summarizing whole expressions. This enhanced the accuracy of the translation and joint interpretation process. To diminish distortion I furthermore instructed Gertrude to write down in ChiChewa all the quotes that she overheard or were uttered to her in her field notes as literally as she could remember.
**Analysis of data**

Gertrude’s and my hand-written field notes were converted into almost 650 typed pages. I have coded these notes with the data analysis software ATLAS.ti (version 6). The encoding has helped me to organize the mass of qualitative data – the many detailed stories about what occurred and was discussed during every day of a full year. Whenever I began the analysis of a new subtopic within this study, I first retrieved all of our notes about that particular topic through ATLAS.ti, read through them, and further organized them into subsections so as to eventually ‘find a system in them and allow for generalizations.

Obviously my analyses do not only rely on what Gertrude and I have written down. When rereading the diaries or ATLAS.ti compilations, in my head the anecdotes became contextualized within memories of the particular situation (or discussions about that situation) as well as of relevant situations that occurred prior to and after it. My own notes thus functioned predominantly as reminders of situations and forgotten details of that situation rather than as data in itself. Gertrude’s notes, however, were not only reminders but also useful for discourse analysis, as her specific selection of what occurrences were worth noting down, and her reflection upon and description of these added an extra layer of ‘emic’ information. I further elaborate upon this aspect in the next section.

**Researchers**

In most sciences the personal background of a researcher should not matter. Trying to uncover universal laws, the effects of anything else but the selected variables under study are eliminated as much as possible. The value of findings is measured by the extent to which they are objectively verifiable and replicable – meaning that if the same test were carried out by another researcher at another moment, similar outcomes should be found. While the research tools and procedures need to be made explicit so as to allow such replication, the particularities of the researcher should be irrelevant and are therefore usually considered unnecessary to reflect upon.

In this sense anthropology is quite exceptional. Part of ‘solid’ anthropological ethnography is self-reflection, as the researcher is his or her own tool to generate data (and in this case, so was Gertrude). The researcher-as-tool is not neutral, nor omnipresent, nor invisible, which makes it relevant to reflect on how his or her presence impacts the data collected. With most anthropologists I share the belief that we can only gain partial understanding of people’s beliefs and practices. Firstly, we can merely observe what we have access to and choose to look at, or stumble on accidently – which is influenced by who we are and how people in the field respond to us. Furthermore, because insights into the daily lives of the research population are usually gained through taking part in daily life, this active presence of the researcher inevitably influences the field, the informants,
and hence the data collected, as I too experienced in the field and described above. Secondly, as widely acknowledged by anthropologists, making sense of what we observe always involves interpretation. In sum, both what we can observe and how we interpret it is conditioned by our own personal background and the particular circumstances of the fieldwork.

Despite these weaknesses as a scientific research method, I believe participant observation\(^\text{21}\) has several crucial strengths that make it worth using. As explained earlier, many of the insights I gained in this study would have been difficult to acquire through other research methods. To overcome the method's weaknesses, an anthropologist must be conscious of his or her position within the field and within the process of data collection and interpretation. While always aiming to minimize bias and distortion, it is still necessary to point out or at least share some of the personal background information of the ethnographer – to let the reader know through which eyes he or she is given a view and analysis.

As my research assistant Gertrude played a significant role in the construction of our data set, it is relevant to not only describe my own but also her personal background.\(^\text{22}\) Despite the widely acknowledged need for reflexivity in ethnography, anthropologists often obscure the role and impact of their research assistants (Pool 1994: 20–21). Dependence on an interpreter tends to be considered and experienced as a weakness, for it presumably distances an anthropologist from his or her informants, and so obstructs access to authentic, ‘unfiltered’ data. A few anthropologists have argued, however, that it is exactly through intense collaboration between the (outsider) researcher and the (insider) assistant that their two ‘worlds’ can be brought closer and insights can be jointly constructed (Bleek 1978, Mommersteeg 1999, Pool 1994). Acknowledging the advantages, or at least the inevitability, of an assistant’s impact on the process of data construction calls for a reflection upon the particularities of this assistant. As experienced and described by Berreman (1962), different assistants may lead to completely different research outcomes. In the following I sketch Gertrude’s personal background and elaborate upon her role in the research. Where relevant throughout this book I note her contribution to the data or analyses concerned. This is not only a matter of respect for her work, but, in line with the above, my own attempt to grasp and represent to the readers how interpretations took shape and conclusions developed.

**Principal researcher: Janneke Verheijen**

I am a 34-year-old woman, born and raised in a well-to-do, urban environment in the Netherlands. When, at the age of 10, I read about the Masai in one of my

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21 As noted, I take this to mean taking part in the daily life routines of the population under study rather than suggesting that anthropologists can actually participate in and observe all activities under study.

22 Gertrude has read all that I have written about her in this study, and approved of it.
grandmother’s weekly magazines, I was hooked, and dreamt for years of living in an African village myself. I had not heard of anthropology yet, and regretted that the dream seemed unachievable. As time went by I came to realize that there are many groups of people around the world living lives profoundly different from mine. My interests broadened, and studying Cultural Anthropology was the logical result. During these studies I spent 18 months in a Guatemalan jungle village – partly working in an eco-tourist resort and partly conducting my Master’s research, which focused on the impacts of the recently introduced televisions in the village, especially on gender relations. I found that the soap operas that most women loved to watch diminished their acceptance of gender inequalities as natural and inevitable (see Verheijen 2005 and 2006).

Looking back, the theme that played the central role throughout my studies was the resilience and agency of marginalized, oppressed groups that are usually depicted as powerless victims. I was intrigued and inspired by two books in particular: *Veiled sentiments: Honor and poetry in a Bedouin society* (1986) by Lila Abu-Lughod, and *Weapons of the weak: Everyday forms of peasant resistance* (1985) by James Scott. Both books acknowledge and eloquently analyze the agency of those living under severely restrictive circumstances to create opportunities for self-determination. What these books exemplified for me was that cultural power dynamics are not to be taken at face value. There may be winners and losers, but the losers are not necessarily passive victims. Often they actively deviate from existing norms – albeit within culturally accepted limits. While this adds to their feeling of self-worth, at the same time it affirms and solidifies these cultural boundaries, as these are not challenged but (grudgingly) accepted. Both books prove that studying such power dynamics – defiance within societal boundaries – can reveal a lot about the wider cultural setting. Not surprisingly, my fascination with this theme resonates throughout this book.

After my studies I obtained a position as social scientist at an agricultural research institute called the International Crops Research Institute for the Semi-Arid Tropics (ICRISAT) through the Associate Professional Officer program of the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs. While ICRISAT’s headquarters are based in India, my station was located in Malawi: I was finally off to Africa. My assignment was to conduct research on the impacts of AIDS on the food security of small-scale, resource-poor farmers. Together with my long-time boyfriend, I lived a more-or-less typical expatriate’s life: my sizeable salary (and the relatively low prices of living) allowed us to buy a car, and employ a housekeeper, gardener, and night-guard. Even when hunger ravaged the rural areas of Malawi, we found the supermarkets in the capital well stocked with imports from South Africa, and the (few) restaurants served us as usual. I spent most of my days in the office, making only occasional day-trips to the field. On such trips our delegation was always welcomed by groups of singing and
dancing women – the villagers had been expecting us and were ready to show us what they thought we wanted.  

During this period I enrolled in the IS-Academy: another initiative of the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs, in alliance with various knowledge institutes in the Netherlands. Launched in 2005, the IS-Academy (IS refers to the Dutch acronym for International Cooperation) resulted from the observation that social scientists are insufficiently involved in developing policy on international cooperation, and civil servants do not habitually draw on available academic knowledge. The aim of the IS-Academy is therefore to improve communication and collaboration between policy makers and social scientists for the benefit of sustainable poverty reduction and development. As one way to accomplish this, the IS-Academy funds research positions for both young civil servants and social scientists on policy-relevant topics. With a research proposal on the potential contribution of agricultural interventions for reducing female susceptibility to HIV I was selected for one of the two PhD positions in the HIV/AIDS trajectory. For reasons mentioned earlier, I could only commence the actual fieldwork for this study after my three-year contract with ICRISAT ended in 2008.

Research assistant: Gertrude Finyiza

As my preparations for the Mudzi fieldwork coincided with the final phase of my contract at ICRISAT, I had to follow the institute’s formal employment protocol to find a research assistant. This meant placing an advertisement in one of Malawi’s national newspapers, in which I called for a female Yao speaker who was willing to live in a village with me for one year. I received over 200 application letters in response. The male and non-Yao speaking applicants were easy to dismiss. From the remaining letters I first selected those from respondents with the highest education levels and most work experience, and discussed these with my (Kenyan) supervisor. He gave me the wise advice to instead select someone with only a secondary degree and, at best, a bit of relevant work experience. He expected – probably rightfully so – that those better qualified would never be willing to stick it out with me under the circumstances in which I planned to be living and working, while someone less qualified would probably be less used to urban luxuries and grateful for the job opportunity. From the five young women whom I then selected for interviews, Gertrude simply struck a chord with me. Her Yao (besides ChiChewa) was fluent, her English sufficient, her attitude pleasan

• Personal background
Gertrude was born in 1985, in her father’s home village in the Southern Malawian district Mangochi. Although her father was of (patrilineal) Ngoni descent, most

23 In Chapter 8 I delve a bit deeper into the interaction between external development agents and their intended beneficiaries
of their fellow villagers were Yao, which allowed Gertrude to pick up the Yao language from her peers. Her mother worked as a midwife, and her father was employed as a jack-of-all-trades at a nearby Roman Catholic missionary post. When he died, the Italian sisters offered support to his family by taking their youngest daughter Gertrude into their orphanage’s boarding school, where she received an exceptionally solid education for rural Malawian standards.

Halfway through her daughter’s secondary schooling at the mission post, Gertrude’s mother decided to move with her children to her own home village in the Central Malawian district Dedza – so that they could inherit land when she eventually died. An employed relative was found who was willing to pay for the continuation of Gertrude’s secondary education near their Dedza village. The man soon died, however, leaving Gertrude with the choice of following her sisters’ (and many other village girls’) example of marrying and farming, or somehow managing to find her own money to finish school. As a child, she had been intrigued by those villagers who every morning dressed up nicely and left for a job, and by her mother when she would dress up to attend a formal meeting. This is what she envisioned for herself too. When a distant aunt living in Malawi’s capital Lilongwe offered to take her in and care for her, Gertrude assumed this entailed continuing school and quickly accepted. Unfortunately, the woman was too pleased with the diligent nanny, cook, and housekeeper that Gertrude turned out to be, and kept postponing her niece’s enrolment in school.

When Gertrude realized that it had never been her aunt’s plan to actually pay for her education (nor for her work), she decided to leave and find her own means. She enrolled herself in a private secondary school because these accept payment in monthly instalments rather than per term as required at public schools – which would lead to amounts too large for her to save up. To gather the monthly instalments she awoke at 3 a.m. every morning and fetched water for houses under construction, walking up and down pumps and construction sites with large water cans on her head. At 8 a.m. she would leave work and head for school. Within two years she graduated. In the year between graduation and becoming my research assistant, she found money in various ways. She rented a telephone and settled herself beside the road to offer calling services, produced seeds for a multinational agribusiness, and taught handicrafts and English at a privately run school. With the money she earned she rented a small house without electricity or water in one of Lilongwe’s ‘high density’24 areas, and sent whatever she could spare to her mother who had become too old to find money herself. Her mission remained finding funds for further education. When I hired her, she felt that the accomplishment of this mission was finally within reach.

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24 The term ‘high density area’ is used in Malawi to describe city neighbourhoods in which the (generally small, run down) structures are built close to each other, in contrast to the ‘low density areas’ in which (generally large, luxurious, fenced) compounds are built at some distance of each other.
• Role in the research
Gertrude quickly became a valued personality in Mudzi. She was respected for her education level, English proficiency, and employment with a white foreigner, and so taken as role model by Mudzi’s youth and women [e.g. P2 0111, 1322, 1519; P3 0374]. She was valued for her neutrality within the ever-changing web of village amities and animosities, her capacity to operate a cell phone, and her handicraft skills, and was frequently asked for assistance in all of these terrains [e.g. P2 0155, 1225, 1305, 1381, 1395, 1439, 1498, 1551, 1600, 1643, 1801, 1906; P3 1065, 1801, 1923, 2678]. Despite their deference to her, many people seemed to feel at ease with her, as if she were one of them. She indeed has an amazing ability to strike the right tone with everybody, from rebellious teenagers to the distinctively old.

While most villagers were long uncertain and suspicious of my agenda in Mudzi, that of Gertrude was considered clear and unsuspicious. She seemed to be seen as simply lucky to have found employment, her probing about certain ‘annoying’ topics was understood as something that came with the job that she had taken up (as any of them would have done if they had the opportunity), rather than blamed on her. The normality of her participation in daily life activities such as fetching water, her fluency in the (social, cultural, and spoken) languages, her non-threatening agenda, and her pleasant personality all contributed to the fact that Gertrude became such an important ‘instrument’ for data collection. Furthermore, as mentioned earlier, her reflection upon these data proved to be relevant information in itself. Surely her perceptions cannot be considered representative of those of Mudzi women, as she had another ethnic and religious background than most Mudzi villagers, had a higher education level than most, and had spent some years in the city. Nonetheless, her perceptions were certainly emic25 rather than etic, offering me an impression of the ‘logico-empirical systems’ (Harris 1968: 571) that prevail in Malawi, pointing out where my ‘normalities’ differed radically from hers and possibly that of Mudzi villagers [e.g. P2 1498; P3 0545, 1249, 1774, 1801, 2342, 2458, 2560, 2623]. For example, I may never (or at least not without considerable delay) have become sensitized enough to realize that a woman washing laundry is not a casual everyday occurrence. As I further discuss in Chapter 7, in a resource-poor context like Mudzi such a seeming triviality is actually highly indicative, namely of rare access to money for soap. Being ‘tuned in’ to village life, Gertrude was always quick to casually remark upon this underlying information [e.g. P3 0930,

25 The concepts ‘emic’ and ‘etic’ were coined by linguistic anthropologist Kenneth Pike (1954), who defined them as follows: the “etic viewpoint studies behaviour as from outside of a particular system,” while the “emic viewpoint results from studying behaviour as from inside the system” (1967 [1954]: 37). The terms have become widely applied in the social sciences, although there are no standard definitions (Lett 1996). In general, ‘emic’ tends to refer to local, participant, or insider explanations of phenomena, and ‘etic’ to scientific explanations of the same phenomena and the emic statements about them
through which I soon learned to see the significance of such events too. When we became more intimate with the village women I noticed that they jumped to the same conclusions in similar instances. In the next section I delve deeper into the content of the data generated by and through Gertrude.

I have already described how Gertrude’s handicraft skills may have saved the study, as these unintendedly led to the frequent informal meetings that offered me indispensable insights into Mudzi women’s minds. Another unplanned way through which Gertrude generated insights that would have been difficult to retrieve otherwise was her venture to buy enough maize to get herself through the year after our fieldwork, now that she had a salary and access to cheap maize. When Mudzi villagers harvested their maize and looked for chances to sell some of it, Gertrude turned out to be a reliable buyer. This was appreciated by those in need of money, and offered us a great opportunity to see when, how, and why maize was sold, even though it was a secret undertaking in many cases [e.g. P2 1500, 1508, 1550, 1562, 1565, 1572, 1582, 1597, 1611, 1668-73; P3 2185].

Gertrude’s advice in the selection of gifts was also valuable, and indicative of how well she was ‘tuned in’ with Mudzi villagers. While I initially expected that during the hunger season villagers would be most happy to receive edible items, she convinced me to instead buy soap and salt – which were indeed highly appreciated. Her better understanding of Mudzi women’s preferences also showed when at the end of our fieldwork we bought zitenje (the cloth that women wear over their skirt, carry their babies in, use as blanket, etc.) for all village women as a final thank-you-and-goodbye gift. To my surprise and amusement, the designs which I had picked were disliked by the Mudzi women for being ‘last year’s fashion’, while those that Gertrude had chosen were favourite.

• Gertrude’s data

For an impression of the data the Gertrude generated in her field notes, I copy a (quite randomly selected) excerpt from it. In these notes she describes what occurred, and particularly what has been said (revealing to some extent also what is left unsaid), during the afternoon of March 19 2009 by the women that came to visit. The texts between square brackets are my additions for clarification

At 1: 50 Sofia [25], Kondwani [35], Ellesi [16], Ada [18] came to knit. Kondwani started saying that Esnart [23] is not getting better because of the fighting and she is failing even to go and fetch some water. Then Ada said that: am going back home to make porridge for my dotta [daughter]. And Ellesi started laughing and said that: Ada you are now busy taking care of your child, does it mean that you didn’t know that if you sleep with a boy without condoms you can get pregnant? Then Kondwani answered that: Ellesi you need to respect Ada because you are not of the same age.

At 3: 40 Livia [21] came and she called me separately and she started saying that: I have missed my periods for 2 and half months but I don’t know what is wrong. Then I told her that: if you slept with your boyfriend without any protection that means you are pregnant and Livia
said that: ah-ah-ah, I didn’t [admitting later that she did] but at the hospital when I went for injection they told me to go back after 3 months but I didn’t. Then Livia left with a sad face. Then Sofia [25] said that: aunt Getu [as some called Gertrude] ndapita tiyeni mundiperekeze [I’m off, escort me], then I escorted her while Ellesi, Kondwani, Lovely [30], Grace [22] were still knitting, then Sofia told me that: Livia seem to be pregnant because she told me that she has missed her periods for 2 months and she told me that she don’t know what to do (we just laughed) and Sofia said to me that ticheza mawa [we chat tomorrow] then she left. Then I asked Grace about what people cook when there is a funeral (where they get food). Then Grace answered that since we harvested from our fields we contributed maize and nandolo [cowpeas], that’s what we are still using right now. Then Tumanene [26] said that: am going back home because my 2 dottas are ill (malaria). Then Kondwani started saying that: am going to beg some ndiwo [from] Sofia [relish, in this case beans which Sofia had received a bag of from her ex-husband as form of support, peace-making offer(107,668),(954,715). Kondwani received a cup of cooked beans for free.].

Sofia came back and she started laughing by telling Tumanene that: please you need to tell your husband in South Africa to be buying nice clothes for you because he sent some clothes as if they don’t sell nice clothes in SA! He must sent [sic] some money for you to buy what you want! Because everybody at the pump was laughing at you. And Tumanene was angry and didn’t answer anything. [P2 1437–1441]

Gertrude’s narrative style is simple. She straightforwardly sums up what happened next and next and next, mostly using first-person speech when quoting others. Although there is generally little elaboration, reflection, or interpretation by Gertrude on the events that she describes in the diaries themselves, her notes offered me ample leads for further inquiry, which always generated interesting and often relevant discussions with her (which I then described in my own field notes). These discussions regularly brought up new questions and so led to new directions for our research endeavours.

As mentioned, not only were Gertrude’s field notes an important contribution, but also her verbal reflections upon the daily lives that we saw and heard unfolding around us greatly contributed to my understanding of Mudzi. As we spent much time together – living together, sharing all meals, and walking long distances to go places or meet villagers – we had sufficient time to talk about what we noticed and how we interpreted this. An example of this from my own field notes:

Gertrude remarks at breakfast that Chikondi often writes [in the income and expenditure diary we asked her to keep] that she pounds maize for other women [in exchange for money]. “You don’t think it is true?” I ask. No, with two small babies, doesn’t think that women would ask her, thinking that she doesn’t have the power for it. Indeed, even at her own house two girls were doing the pounding rather than herself. “So you think she hides something [the real income source],” I conclude, and probe [knowing the common logic by now] “but who would propose to a woman with two young babies?” She answers: “Ah, they [men] can/will, especially knowing the behaviour of her husband [who does not help Chikondi, only shows up at night for food and shelter] they will think she needs support.” [P3 2458]
Justification for a focus on women

In this research I have focussed on women – of all ages, but particularly those in the mid-age category: those in the prime of their lives, with a household, field, and children to care for. Men have only been included at times, when the opportunity arose. Not often did I purposefully approach a man for interaction [e.g. P3 0879, 2132–8, 2549–52] – with the frequently visited male village head of Mudzi A as the exception because of his formal position as community spokesman. This focus on women has both practical and topic-related underpinnings.

As has become clear in this chapter, to a large extent I have let the data collection process more or less run its own, itinerant course. As a result, we interacted most intensively with the village women rather than the men. Women form the core of the (largely matrilineal) Mudzi community; they are its stable members. Their husbands and boyfriends are rather temporarily involved individuals, not much connected to the other men and women in Mudzi. Although this by itself was no reason to exclude them from the study, the fact that they were less present in everyday public social interactions, which are dominated by women, made it difficult for us to casually encounter and interact with them without much disrupting the ‘natural flow of things. Interaction between non-related men and women is uncommon in Mudzi and generally frowned upon as it could indicate a (upcoming) sexual relationship. As will become clear throughout this book, there is a lot of rivalry between Mudzi women over men. As a result, any ‘suspicious’ interaction between a man and woman is closely watched and scrutinized. Gertrude received relationship proposals at various occasions throughout our fieldwork period [P2 0893, 906, 1020, 1048], which she kept scrupulously secret from other women, out of fear of triggering jealousies and distrust. Building on my experience in Guatemala, I had purposefully asked my husband to visit me in the field so that my marital status would be clear to all. I so hoped to avert male proposals on the one hand and female fears of competition on the other. However, as I was without my husband during most of my time in Mudzi, some expressed surprise about the fact that I did not take on a lover for the time being. “He sure did,” I was guaranteed, considering how long I had already left him unattended.

Our active interaction with Mudzi men may or may not have aggravated the fears and suspicions that my presence stirred in general, and may or may not have caused (covert) tensions and hostilities. In any case, beyond the various practical considerations, men’s opinions were only of secondary relevance as my research question revolved around women’s decision-making processes. Surely, we observed men’s actions where possible, and heard lots of talks about men, so that men are not completely absent from this study. Readers particularly interested in the Malawian male perspective on sexual relationships and AIDS I refer to Kaler (2003, 2004a) and Kalipeni & Ghosh (2007).
By concentrating on the women who lived in Mudzi during our fieldwork, men were not the only ones left ‘out of focus’. Even more so were those who decided to leave Mudzi. This is important to realize, because for all I know these may have been women and girls with particularly different attitudes towards securing a livelihood and sexual relationships from those who stayed behind and were studied, which may have biased the results. Likewise, I have not inquired much about prime-age women who died prior to the study, who may have had deviating attitudes towards sexual relationships. I regret not having gathered more information on numerous issues including these, but there is only so much that a researcher can do during a limited period of time and given the focus of the study.

Ethical considerations

Contrary to some other social scientists, working in other settings or at the service of or with funding from other agencies, I was not obliged to have my research proposal approved by an ethical council. ICRISAT did require that I follow a course and take an exam in ‘research ethics on human participation in research’. I did so at the Office of Research Integrity of the US Department of Health and Human Services.

Neither of these two facts has much to do with my moral concerns during our fieldwork. These concerns first and foremost sprouted from common human sense (‘common’ at least in the cultural environment where I grew up). The first of the two moral dilemmas that most bothered me was the extent to which I could and wanted to disturb Mudzi women – who were obviously too polite to turn me away yet seemed uneasy with my visits. The other moral dilemma concerned the acceptability of including women’s and men’s informal comments that were not expressed to us for obvious research purposes.

There are no universally ratified ethical rules that social scientists must abide, as there are for some other professions such as medical doctors. There are however various, largely overlapping, lists of ethical guidelines for anthropological research, of which I take the 2011 Association of Social Anthropologists’ (ASA) Ethical Guidelines for Good Research Practice26 as reference point here, because this code offers advice for both my concerns.

The problem of including Mudzi women’s and men’s informal comments in our data set is the fact that it cannot be ascertained whether this would be approved of by those who expressed the comments. What is lacking, thus, is their informed consent as far as this specific data is concerned – a directive mentioned in most ethical research codes. All villagers have however been invited to the introductory

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26 Available at: http://www.theasa.org/downloads/ASA%20ethics%20guidelines%202011.pdf
meeting in which I elaborately explained my wish to stay in their community to gain an in-depth understanding of their daily lives, and in which I asked for their approval for this endeavour. As also noted earlier, I have made clear, both at this point and at later occasions, that everyone was at any time free to refuse participation without further consequences. All village women, thus including those who regularly visited us at home, have in addition been told again about the research and asked personally whether or not they were willing to help me in this study. All expressed their willingness. Moreover, all women (and men) who visited our house did so completely voluntarily. They were aware of the general research purpose of our stay in their midst, and are likely to have been aware that most of what they said in my or Gertrude’s presence reached me. To this end I often deliberately participated in conversations to emphasize that I could and did follow what was being said, and brought up issues that women had told Gertrude.

Although I frequently emphasized our general research purposes, I never mentioned to Mudzi villagers my particular interest in sexual decision making and HIV risk. This goes against the ethical code that potential informants must know precisely and in as much detail as possible what they are consenting to. I have felt no ethical hesitation, however, in remaining vague about my ultimate goal of unravelling the interaction between livelihood insecurity and sexual practices. Firstly, I did not lie when stating that I wanted to gain a general understanding of women’s daily lives. As mentioned, this was indeed what I hoped to achieve. Secondly, as also noted earlier, I believe that more detail about my exact topic of interest may have harmed the individuals that I would have approached with questions or interacted with in any other way. The main principle of most ethical research codes states that the quest for knowledge may not harm the wellbeing of research participants. The fact that I hid my precise interest focus was the result of weighing pros and cons: I preferred to protect my (future) informants by emphasizing my general interest in women’s lives and decision-making processes rather than their involvement in sexual relationships.

Other measures were also taken to minimize potential harm and protect the wellbeing of research participants. We never passed on information that we received privately to third parties within the village community. We tried our best to avoid discord and jealousies among villagers, for example by not privileging anyone over others. By changing the name of the research locality as well as all names in this thesis, I am reasonably confident that no harm will be done to any of the persons involved by using the comments that they expressed to the research team (that is, Gertrude or me) or in our presence.

The ASA ethical guidelines furthermore suggest that anthropologists should avoid “undue intrusion” by their enquiry and methods (principle I.3), elaborating that:

In many of the social scientific enquiries that have caused controversy, problems have not arisen because participants have suffered directly or indirectly any actual harm. Rather,
concerns have resulted from participants’ feelings of having suffered an intrusion into private and personal domains (ASA 2011: 4).

As explained in this chapter I have often felt that visiting villagers’ homes with a list of set questions and pen and paper to note down their answers, or even voice recorder to register their every word, made many nervous and uncomfortable. I believe that this research approach was too intrusive for the Mudzi case, and was effectively circumvented by increasingly relying on informal conversations. In other words, my discomfort about including villagers’ conversations with or in the presence of Gertrude was eased because it allowed me to lessen the burden that I would have placed on them otherwise. In the ethnographic chapters that follow, the fruits of our struggles to gather relevant, personal, and often intimate data are presented and assessed in detail.
Women’s sexual relationship choices

Introduction

It is with some reluctance that I refer to sexual relationships in the title of this chapter. The main focus of the chapter are the relationships between men and women which are distinguishable from all other sorts of relationships by the fact that those involved have sex with each other – hence the title. However, labelling these relationships as ‘sexual’ leaves the impression that they revolve predominantly around sex. And this, as will become clear, is misleading. Sex is one aspect of unions between women and men, usually engaged in right from the onset of a relationship. But for most men and women it is not a main reason for partnering.

The transactional sex paradigm, described in Chapter 1, asserts that many poor women engage in sexual relationships to access material support from men. What is believed to make these relationships risky in a context of high HIV prevalence is that these women – presumably desperate for support – do not demand that men use condoms and are involved in multiple relationships simultaneously or successively. When using this definition of sexual risk, many of Mudzi women’s sexual relationships too must be called ‘risky’. The fact that it is not uncommon for these women to readily accept relationship proposals from unknown men further adds to their risk in this context of high HIV prevalence.

The ultimate aim of this chapter is to assess the extent to which male support is a motive for Mudzi women to engage in risky sexual relationships, and whether acute poverty underlies this. As will be discussed, Mudzi women often explicitly subscribe to the notion that it is poverty that pushes them to enter into (multiple) sexual partnerships. The ethnographic data presented suggest, however, that this discourse itself should be considered part of a complex survival strategy.

I first make some introductory comments on different relationship types, and the vague and flexible distinctions between these. Then I assess each of the three aspects
that make relationship practices in Mudzi particularly risky in an environment of high HIV prevalence. Finally, I deconstruct Mudzi women’s discourse on their need for male support on basis of the data analysed in the preceding sections.

Defining relationships

In the context of this chapter on sexual relationships two issues are worth noting beforehand. Firstly, it is important to recognize that throughout Africa the conjugal bond has long been and in many places continues to be considered inferior to the lineage bond.1 Both men and women in the first place remain members of their lineage, irrespective of whom they marry. As a result, women are not primarily considered (prospective) wives, but (prospective) procreators of the lineage. A woman’s social identity and self-identity are thus not derived from wifehood but rather from motherhood. This is exemplified by the fact that women, as soon as they have children, are in Mudzi always addressed and referred to as “Mother of So-and-so,” and not, as is customary in the West, in their capacity as wife, as “Mrs. Name-of-husband.” Such naming may seem a trivial particularity, but it signals an essentially different value system. Marriage to a certain man is not a central part of a woman’s identity, and switching partners does not affect her identification. Although marriage in general is valued for practical reasons, precisely whom a woman marries is considered of less importance. This may be illustrated by Audrey Richards’s finding that young women of the Bemba – a matrilineally organized society with kinship structures similar to the Yao – were expected to simply accept the first marriage proposal she received (Richards 1969 [1940]: 22). Scholars of matrilineally organized communities throughout Africa, furthermore, have noted that too strong a commitment between husband and wife tends to be socially disapproved of, and discouraged in more or less subtle ways, as this is feared to compete with the spouses’ loyalty towards their respective lineages (Bleek 1987a: 139, 142, Poewe 1981: 56, 67–8, Stuart et al. 2011a: 30).

Secondly, throughout Africa anthropologists have noted that traditional marriages were not sealed through one, single, clearly defined rite, but rather became gradually solidified through processes that could take extensive periods of time.2 To what extent this was the case for the Yao is unclear. The one classic reference point for this ethnic group – British sociologist and anthropologist James Clyde Mitchell – only reported that formalized marriage rites seemed non-existent, writing that: “marriage is legalized entirely by the public acknowledgement of the fact by representatives of each [partner’s matrikin] group” (Mitchell 1962: 35). In

an attempt to lay down Yao marital law, Ibik (1970: 15) noted likewise that a couple is considered married when specifically assigned matrikin from both spouses (the *ankhoswe*) acknowledge the marriage and by doing so allow cohabitation. However, examining marital court cases in matrilineal Malawi, Mwambene (2005: 11-12) found that judges sometimes rule a relationship to be marriage even if no *ankhoswe* have validated it, for example if the couple had cohabited for a number of years and the man had built a house for his partner. It seems reasonable to assume that marriage formation in southern Malawi resembled the described processual type. Our findings from Mudzi would neatly fit in with this hypothesis.

Our data and this hypothesis also fit in with James Gibbs’ theory of epainogamy (1963), which tries to identify the societal structures and processes that stabilize and destabilize the institution of marriage. In epainogamous societies, marriage is highly valued and socially sanctioned, resulting in generally stable marriages and low divorce rates. In non-epainogamous societies, to the contrary, marriage is instable and divorce common. According to Gibbs (1963: 555), an important characteristic of non-epainogamous societies is the low level of marriage bond “ceremonialization” – which appears to apply for much of Africa as for Mudzi in particular. Another characterizing attribute of non-epainogamous societies is normative ambiguity concerning marital relationships – which too applies to the Mudzi case, as I will describe.

The Mudzi definition of marriage (and consequently divorce) that I adopt in this book is without clear-cut demarcations and open for some individual interpretation. The ChiChewa term used for it is *banja*, which literally translates as nuclear family or household, and in principle refers to a steady relationship that entails living together. Following general custom within Malawi I use the English term ‘marriage’ as a translation of *banja*. A *chibwenzi* relationship in principle refers to the courting stage of a relationship, in which partners remain in their separate households and visit each other during daytime. In theory, the couple can get to know each other during this period, while the man assembles the items (pot, pan, plates, cups, blanket) that he is supposed to bring to marriage [P2 0451, 1436; P3 0608, 1911, 3799, 3800, 3843, 3847, 3937, 3943, 4009]. In practice, a *chibwenzi* relationship does not necessarily lead to *banja*, and a *banja* relationship need not be preceded by a *chibwenzi* stage.

In Mudzi, a couple is considered formally married only if the *ankhoswe* have gathered to approve the marriage and a payment has been made to the chief to formalize it. The amount due varies per chief; in Mudzi it was set at 700 Kwacha.\(^3\) Although the groom should be the one to pay this money, some of my female informants ‘lent’ (read: gave) their husband-to-be the amount to speed up the

\(^3\) Approximately 3.5 Euro at the time of the research – a relatively substantial amount, say seven days’ wage for someone lucky enough to find piece-work
formalization of their relationship [e.g. P2 2137]. If the sum is not paid, and the chief thus not officially informed, he or she will not intervene and assist when a marital crisis occurs [P3 0531, 1266]. The payment is considered a token of a man’s seriousness about the relationship.

In everyday practice, however, a man tends to cross the line from being labelled as boyfriend (chibwenzi) to husband (mwamuna) as soon as he spends a night at his partner’s house. Men who never spend a night but continue to visit regularly, may also in everyday speech eventually be called husband, both by the woman involved and others. Furthermore, many men do not formally terminate their relationship with a certain woman, but rather just disappear, leaving their wives in doubt about their relationship status for quite some time [e.g. P3 0546, 1501, 1856, 3821, 3959, 3996]. Even when a woman knows that her husband has left her to found another household, she may still at times refer to him as “my husband” [e.g. P2 1704; P3 1531]. It seems that the categories of boyfriend, husband, and ex-husband are not clearly demarcated, leaving ample opportunity to use the terms interchangeably and to one’s advantage [e.g. P3 1179, 2058, 2385–6, 2708]. The causes and consequences of this indeterminacy are analysed further on in this chapter. For now it suffices to point out that when in this chapter I mention a certain relationship type or status, I follow the terms used by the informants in question. In most of the cases, when I write ‘married’, this means that the couple lives together, but not necessarily that the relationship has been formalized [see P3 1460]. Furthermore, as the distinction between chibwenzi and marital relationships is not always clear nor of relevance, I use the terms interchangeably with ‘sexual relationship’, ‘sexual partnership’, and ‘sexual liaison’, which underlines the ambiguity of the relationship classifications. Likewise, a relationship proposal, whether chibwenzi or banja, in practice means a request for a sexual relationship. Therefore, I also use the terms ‘relationship proposal’ and ‘sexual proposal’ more-or-less interchangeably, depending on the particular facet I want to emphasize.

As will become clear, the scene of sexual relationships in Mudzi village is highly dynamic, with unions constantly forming, dissolving, and reviving. Although Mudzi women refer to the ideal of a steady, lifelong partnership with a husband who provides for the household and helps in the field, it is doubtful whether such stable relationships have ever been the norm. Partnerships tend to be casual and temporary. As a result of their generally unstable unions, most of my informants have had multiple sexual relationships throughout their lives, some of them simultaneously. At the time of the baseline interviews, 56 of 90 Mudzi women considered themselves married. Of these at least 18 knew, or had reason to believe, that their husband was at the same time also married to another woman. During the course of our fieldwork, at least nine women maintained relationships with several men simultaneously [e.g. P2 0284, 0912, 1084, 1600, 1718, 1993; P3 1186, 1208, 1462, 2253, 2709]. Of the 34 women who were not in a relationship at the time of
our first interview round, 10 were widowed, 17 abandoned, and 7 divorced by their own choice. I have no means of quantifying the turnover rate of relationships in Mudzi as most of the women we interviewed claimed to have had only one or two partners throughout their lives, while other evidence suggests that they had many more⁴ [e.g. P2 0082, 1058, 1629; P3 1221, 3921]. Personal observation gives some indication though, as during the course of the research at least 17 marital relationships dissolved – in 7 cases the woman sent off her husband, in 9 cases the husband left by himself, and in 1 case the man passed away. Of all these women who lost their partner, 11 remarried within the same year, and 2 even twice.

**Riskiness of relationship practices**

While the next chapter revolves around the act of sex itself, this chapter assesses the relative riskiness of Mudzi women’s relational behaviour in a context of high HIV prevalence. About sexual intercourse itself it suffices for now to note that condoms are rarely used in Mudzi. Considering this low condom use, the relational practices that put women at increased risk of HIV infection, are 1) their often quick acceptance of relationship proposals from unknown men, 2) the high turnover rate of relationships, and 3) the frequent occurrence of overlapping relationships. In the following sections I assess each of these three risky facets of relationship practices. In particular, I aim to unravel the rationales behind each, so as to understand the extent to which a need for material support plays a role.

*Quick and pragmatic entry into sexual relationships*

- **The practice of proposing**

  Relationships in Mudzi tend to come about quickly and easily. Formally only men can propose to start a relationship. Following matrilineal custom, men generally do not have their own house, but move in with their wife. Consequently, those proposing are either young bachelors still living with their mother, recently widowed or divorced and thus homeless men, or married men who want a new or an extra partner. Proposals often entail little more than the straightforward remark that the man is either looking for a *chibwenzi* or for a *banja*. It is then up to the proposed to inform him whether she too is interested in starting a relationship, be it *banja* or *chibwenzi*. Whichever relationship type a woman agrees to, acceptance is soon followed by sexual intercourse with her new partner.⁵

  Sometimes a man’s offer is clear: bringing substantial gifts and visiting a woman’s parents are interpreted as signs of his seriousness about a longer-term

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⁴ See Helleringer et al. 2011 about biased self-reports on sexual history in rural Malawi.

relationship. Offering some money to have sex right then and there in the bushes is at the other end of the proposing spectrum [P2 1546; P3 2489]. Often, however, a man’s exact intentions remain uncertain, and women must outweigh the risks and benefits of accepting or declining a proposal. In the worst-case scenario – not a rarity – the man makes alluring promises about a shared future but disappears shortly after impregnation, leaving the woman with a damaged reputation and an extra mouth to feed. Some men continue to visit frequently, but never actually move in – apparently married elsewhere. Others live up to their promises, at least for some time: building their wife a house, helping her in the field, and providing money for other needs.

Occasionally, women receive proposals from boys and men from within the small Mudzi community or from fellow students at school. However, both men and women mentioned that they prefer to date or marry someone from outside their home village, as they feel it is difficult to respect and be respected by someone they have played with as a child [P2 0009, 0563, 1593; P3 2132]. To find a partner, men therefore generally go to another village, ask around for unmarried women, and either visit those at home to propose or have someone else transmit the proposal. Alternatively, friends and relatives can be asked to approach suitable women in their network to propose on a man’s behalf. The following account, based on what Naima (19) and Ethelo (23) separately told me about how they got together, is exemplary for many other unions:

During adolescence Ethelo built his own shed near his mother’s house and lived there alone for some time. He began to long for company in the evenings and told his brother – who had married in Mudzi – that he wanted a wife. This brother suggested that Naima (19) could be a suitable partner. She already had two children, but, he told Ethelo, took good care of these children, did not involve herself with many men, and worked hard in the field. With Ethelo’s approval, the matchmaking brother then approached Naima, asking her if she would be interested in marrying his brother. Naima answered that she first wanted to see the proposer. When Ethelo visited his brother in Mudzi again, Naima was called to come and take a look. The matchmaker assured her that his brother worked hard in the field, and Naima then and there agreed to marry him. [P3 2132, 3893]

To a large extent proposing and accepting are informed by day-to-day pragmatism. In the above example, the assurance that Naima behaved as a proper woman was enough reason for Ethelo to propose marriage. Likewise, when Naima found that her proposer looked reasonably normal, and was likely to help cultivate her field, she too was prepared to start living as a couple. Whether some level of attraction may have played a role too in her decision to accept is difficult to ascertain but not unlikely [see for example P3 3863, 3889, 3990, 3998, 4002] – a point to which I return further on.

Regularly, relationships come about with even less forehand knowledge of the spouse-to-be. In their quest for a partner, some men simply approach a woman or girl they meet on the road, at the market, or at a football match, and ask her on the
spot whether she is available for and interested in starting a relationship. The many self-reports of random proposals and proposals from unknown men are backed by first-hand experiences of Gertrude and myself [P2 0176, 0288, 0906, 1020, 1048; P8 0083]. Even when proposals came from men unknown to them, many women accepted without hesitation [P2 1131, 1208, 1710; P3 2064, 2105, 3766, 3819, 3849, 3900, 3927, 3959, 3976, 3978, 4000, 4012]. Considering the relative shortage of men (see Chapter 3), they were relieved to have found someone who was prepared to commit himself, and feared that their proposer might take his offer elsewhere if they dawdled too long [P3 0418, 0714, 0746, 1444]. Some justified that there was no point in trying to find out more about the man, because both he and others could be lying anyhow [P3 0495, 0530, 3965]. Several women acquiescently said they had trusted that God sent them the husband they deserved [P3 0742, 3917, 4000, 4018]. The only way to find out if someone will make a good partner, many women felt, is to just start living together [P3 0530, 2785, 2795, 3900, 3962, 3978, 4012]. For some women, the mere fact that they were proposed *banja* rather than *chibwenzi* was enough reason to accept:

Salika was 19 when a man came to the house where she stayed with her parents. When he asked her to start a family with him, she accepted immediately because “when a man proposes *banja*, it means he is serious about taking care of you”. [P3 3978, also P3 3455–6, 3889]

Aisha (then 19) was moving around selling vegetables when a man proposed *chibwenzi* to her. She refused, declaring that she did that before and then was left pregnant – she would not accept anything less than marriage now. After a week the man came to visit her, stating that since he did not have a wife at that time, he was willing to marry her. Without knowing anything else about the man, Aisha then and there allowed him to move in with her. [P3 3891]

Other women, or the same women at other points in their lives, did take some time before accepting a proposal – depending on their character, the urgency of the need for a partner, the quality of the life offered by the proposer, and past experiences [P2 1456; P3 2134, 3793, 3895, 3897, 3915, 3935, 3939, 4016; P8 0014]. Some just waited to see whether the man’s interest was sincere enough to come back and repeat his proposal [P3 2134; P8 0014]. Others actively asked around about their proposer’s marital status and behaviour [P3 3793, 3895, 3897, 3915, 3935, 3939, 4016]. Generally, these women were sufficiently satisfied if they heard that he was not aggressive, or a womanizer, smoker, or beer drinker. Notably, working hard in the field was in many cases merely considered a plus, not a prerequisite. During this time some proposers tried to make a good impression by bringing soap, body lotion, relish, or even clothes and biscuits. Most women gladly accepted the gifts, interpreting them as a promising indication of their proposer’s future performance as provider of the household (see also Wamoyi et al. 2010: 10), as did Malita:

Malita (62) met her first husband on the way back from buying relish at the near-by trading centre. A passer-by told her that he wanted to marry her. “Ndikukufunani banja...” Malita did not accept immediately because the man came from far so she did not know anything about him. When she later inquired, his friends told her that he was a good man because he did not
have another wife. In the following month he came to bring soap, salt, relish. “When I saw those gifts,” she says, “I realized that he is a good man and we married.” [P3 3939, also P3 3786, 3793, 3897, 3896, 4002]

As can be expected, many of Mudzi women’s life histories testify that neither upfront inquiries nor gifting behaviour during the courting stage guaranteed a good husband.

Not all relationship offers are accepted. As we shall see further on, young women who still live with and are reasonably provided for by their caretakers tend to be pickier about exactly whose offer to accept. Even women with their own household, field, and children to take care of may refuse proposals if they do not trust the offer (for example when it sounds too good to be true, leading to suspicion that the proposer may be a particularly ‘bad catch’, possibly ill and in need of care [e.g. P2 1445; P3 0538, 4004]), or when they feel the circumstances are not ‘ripe’. Several noted, for example, that they were still too angry about the misconduct of their previous husband and feared similar behaviour from the next [e.g. P2 1527; P3 0517, 0698, 0991, 3919, 4004]. Whenever these women did feel ready again to accept a new proposal, this generally seemed to have little to do with the particular proposer but rather with the timing of his offer. At least, this is how women frame their relationships choices: as instigated by pragmatic considerations rather than affectionate preferences. In other words, and as suggested by the data described earlier in this section, marriage is highly valued, but exactly whom one marries often seems of less importance.

• Reasons for accepting
Discourse of need and destitution

Gertrude asked Jane (17) about the young man she had been walking with. Jane answered that it was her new boyfriend, explaining that they had met the day before at the football field where he had proposed chibwenzi and she had accepted. “He repairs radios”, she merely added, “so it will not be difficult for him to provide money for soap.” [P2 1710]

The motive that Mudzi women mentioned most frequently for becoming (and staying) involved in a particular sexual relationship was their need for material support. When justifying their acceptance of a sexual proposal women often used the words mavuto [problems], kuvutika [to have problems/suffer], or kusowa [to lack/be needy], adding that they had hoped that their proposer would help them to get the things they lacked, in particular soap, food, and clothes [e.g. P2 1580, 1653, 1901; P3 0495, 0732, 0741, 0784, 0991, 0995, 1501, 1730, 3165, 3790, 3849, 3861, 3941, 3945, 3949, 3952, 3970, 3987, 3998, 4005, 4008, 4012]. Many then elaborated upon their claimed need for support by emphasizing that they had lost their caretakers or struggled to care for their children alone [e.g. P2 1653, 1901; P3 0741, 0746, 0784, 0995, 1501, 3849, 3949, 3952, 3987, 3998, 4002, 4012];
Mariya⁶ (38) relates that her parents had so many children to take care of that she structurally lacked soap, clothes, even food. Therefore, when at 15 a man offered to take care of her, she gladly accepted his proposal. Her problems were so urgent, Mariya emphasizes, that she did not take time to inquire about the man or get to know him better before actually marrying [P3 0495, 3941]. The man turned out to be lazy, and did not give her the support she had hoped for. One day their baby fell off her back because she did not have a sufficiently large and strong *chitenje* with which to properly tie the infant. She blamed her husband, for he had failed to meet her needs as mother. Fed up with his behaviour, she complained to her *ankhoswe* and chief, and divorced [P3 0506]. She moved back into her mother’s house, where she faced the same problems as before. Fortunately, it did not take long before a next man proposed marriage, and she again accepted gratefully [P3 0517, 3851]. In the first years of their marriage the man behaved fine, regularly buying *ndiwo*, soap, clothes for her and later their three children. But he liked other women too much, and began spending nights elsewhere. One day he simply stopped coming back home [P3 3856, 3902]. Mariya struggled to keep her household going, working hard in her field and doing *ganyu* on the side for money [P3 0519, 1603, 3902]. She felt relieved when yet another man came looking for a wife and was referred to her house – he moved in the very same night. The man did do *ganyu* every now and then, but gave her little money, spending most of it on beer. On top of that, he sometimes beat her badly when he came home drunk, which soon made her decide to send him away [P3 0608, 3817, 4000]. The next proposer really was a good man, because he often helped her on her field and treated well her children from other men. Unfortunately, he died a few years after marriage, leaving her with two more children to take care of. One day when doing *ganyu* in a neighbouring village, she and one of the other day labourers found out that both had no partner, and decided to marry – “so that he can help me”. Mariya assumed he would be a serious man, since he was working on the field at the time they met [P 3772]. But she now fiercely complains about her husband’s gambling and extramarital girlfriends. She accepts him nonetheless, saying that she would not know how else to manage taking care of her six children. [P3 0551, 3851]

Similar to many other women’s statements, Mariya clarified that she entered and stayed in marriage because of the material support that she needed and needs from a husband. Not only in the formal accounting of their marital histories to us, but also amongst each other did Mudzi women, such as Jane quoted earlier, underline the material rationale for their involvement in sexual relationships. In women’s self-reports, thus, the assumptions that underlie the transactional sex paradigm are repeatedly confirmed

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⁶ This is the only data fragment that I have ‘fabricated’, by blending the stories of various Mudzi women into the marital history of one fictional woman. Fabrication of cases is obviously risky. By only picking out certain elements of a real case, removing these from their context, and merging them at wish within a new fictional context, an ethnographer enlarges the risk of overlooking important correlations between factors. Nonetheless, this approach has been applied by others too. Nick Miedema (1983) even did so on a much wider scale in his study on the Scilly Islands. He opted to condense all his data into the form of a biography of one fictional ego, striving for an impression of a ‘typical’ Scilly islander. An elaboration upon this method can be found in Miedema (1984). In another anthropological study, by Warner & Lunt (1941) on the social class structures in a North American city, all cases presented were fictional merges of real data. Contrary to Miedema, I do not suggest that my imaginary Mariya represents a ‘typical’ Mudzi woman – the great diversity of women’s situations makes it preposterous that one marital history could be representative for all. I have simply chosen to condense the data in this way for efficiency sake, so as to represent numerous rationales within a relatively short text. Based on our findings from and experiences in the field, I believe that this fabricated relationship history does justice to the accounts of real Mudzi women.
Women’s widespread claim that poverty had pushed them to engage in sexual relationships seems backed by birth statistics retrieved from the two maternity wards in the area. At both wards data could be recovered for (almost) each month of the five years prior to the research. Table 1 shows the average number of births per month over these five years and so gives an insight in the seasonal fluctuations. The table shows a significantly higher number of childbirths in August and September. This peak occurs nine months after the time when food shortages become most pressing.

Figure 5.1: Average number of births per month between 2004 and 2009 at the nearest health clinic and Balaka hospital.

It is unlikely that fewer contraceptives are used during the hunger months than other months – these seem to be used minimally at any time despite their availability, free of cost, at the various clinics in the area. It also seems improbable that more women deliver at the hospital during these months instead of at home, in their fields, or on the side of the road on their way to the hospital. What does seem plausible is that the incidence of miscarriages increases during the harsh hunger months, causing a dip in birth rates in the months that follow. Furthermore, mothers may be forced to wean their babies during the hunger period as their

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7 One maternity ward is located in the small clinic at the nearest trading centre, approximately five km (or one hour walking) away, and the other in the district hospital at Balaka town, approximately 13 km (or two hours on bicycle) away.

8 Notably, the individual years show greater disparities in number of births per month. However, as the exact timing and length of the (peak of the) annual hunger season differ per year, so too do the peaks in childbirths. Hence, when calculating the average over several years, the individual peaks are leveled off.
breastmilk dries up, which reactivates their fertility. At the same time, however, fertility may be negatively affected by the lower food intake. In line with women’s own statements about the link between pressing need and resorting to sexual liaisons for male support, the peak may indeed indicate an increased incidence of unprotected sex during the season of scarcity.

Contesting the ‘acute poverty’ claim
Interestingly, however, the birth statistics in Table 5.1 also show a peak in December and January – nine months after harvest, when food is abundant and relatively large sums of money flow into the community because the main cash crop, cotton, is sold. Apparently the occurrence of (unprotected) sexual intercourse peaks both when the need for money or food is highest and – albeit to a lesser extent – when the availability of money and food are highest. In other words, the incidence of unprotected sex also peaks at the very moment at which advocates of the transactional sex paradigm hypothesize a decline in women’s sexual risk taking. The increase in sexual relationships during harvest time was confirmed by the (unsolicited) quotes from informants, such as the following:

While knitting Livia (21, unmarried mother of two), claimed that she did not want to get involved with men anymore. The other women laughed, and one forecasted: “Ah, we’ll see during the next cotton-selling season, you’ll surely find yourself pregnant again then!” Another woman added: “Have you forgotten that during cotton-selling season farmers have a lot of money and can cheat on you [by saying] that they’ll marry you and then when the money finishes go back to their wife??” P3 0507

Ada (18), chatting at our veranda, remarked: “At the time of cotton people are happy, everywhere new relationships start because of the money”. [P2 1167]

When Venesi (35) passed by with an unknown man, Livia (21) commented: “We are close to cotton season, a lot of marriages now.” [P2 1300]

As described, all Mudzi women grow their own maize, and many also grow and sell cotton. At least for the time being, their livelihoods are secure during harvest time. Nonetheless the occurrence of sexual relationships appears to increase at this time of the year. Apparently, these women’s involvement in sexual relationships is not only motivated by acute and pressing destitution, as generally claimed in Mudzi women’s self-reports and assumed by advocates of the transactional sex paradigm. More accurately, women seized the opportunity to access extra money9 – as some men have, or claim they will soon have, full pockets after selling their cotton harvest. Assessing the data obtained through other means than the formal interviews indeed paints a more nuanced picture, for example about the type of material support desired and received from men. Rather than merely concerning

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9 As anticipated by Gertrude: P3 2466.
the coverage of basic necessities, gifts include soft drinks, fancy clothes, expensive slippers, hair chemicals and extensions, even cell phones [P2 0912, 1702, 1878, 1890; P3 0863, 1472, 2240, 2466, 2560].

The peak in sexual relationships around harvest time may, however, stem not only from higher rates of acceptance by women, but also from increased numbers of proposals by men. In her historical study on famine in southern Malawi, Vaughan (1987) writes that colonial administrators were shocked to see many men abandoning their wives and children when food shortages became pressing. Our field data indicate that this continues to occur [P2 1178, 1221, 1624; P3 1729]. Dora (age 42) was one of the women whose husband disappeared without a word when times became hard. During the hunger season, she had to find food for her household and cultivate her field with only the help of her children. When her harvest was about to be brought in, however, her husband re-appeared, bringing with him some fresh fish, a radio, and a chitenje. Dora gladly accepted the gifts and let him re-enter her household [P3 1729]. As can be gathered from the following excerpts [and P2 1221, 1795; P3 1917, 2202, 2766], it was fairly common in Mudzi that men, like Dora’s husband, came to propose precisely when women had food or money in abundance (see also Vaughan 1987: 48):

When Venesi (35) passed by with a certain man, Livia (21) started laughing and said that: “This is how village men are. The one who is in relationship with Venesi wants to eat the maize that will come from her field. After that their relationship will end” [P2 1058, also P3 2404]. Some weeks later, another Mudzi woman commented about Venesi’s new relationship: “Venesi wants to get married now! But after cotton season they will divorce. That is what most of the men use to do.” [P2 1398]

When Gertrude was fetching water at the pump, a man passed by whom she had not seen before. One of the women explained that it was the second ex-husband of Salika (39), adding that he still comes to see their children every now and then – especially when he hears that Salika’s brother, who works in South Africa, has sent her some money. [P2 1629]

Belita (46): “Men deliberately look for richer women, with iron sheet roof, so he can just be eating.” [P3 3608]

As appears from the above fragments, not only women were looking for (complementary) resources, some men too perceived the season of abundance as an opportunity to increase their access to food and money by entering into new (sometimes polygynous) relationships or reuniting with exes. Rather than benefitting materially, the women who accepted proposals from these men sacrificed part of their harvest and income to be in a relationship. Hence, while in self-reports the majority of women claimed that acute poverty had pushed them into sexual relationships with men, it appears that the material support they retrieved from men at times entailed luxuries rather than basic necessities, and was non-existent at other times. Furthermore, as will be elaborated upon in Chapter 8, women regularly have means to find money other than through sexual relationships with men, and many of them indeed resort to these means when
they (temporarily) have no sexual partner or feel they receive too little support from such partner. In sum, the urgent economic need that women themselves refer to insufficiently explains their involvement in sexual relationships.

Women’s engagement in sexual relationships during times of temporary abundance can partly be understood as an optimization of their access to resources. Although they do not necessarily need support at that very moment, the initiation of a new relationship may well be in anticipation of the ever-returning times of shortages. This seems confirmed by Rosemary (49) who answered, when I asked her whether women with an independent income still want to marry: “Yes, for in case you fail to take care of yourself and your children sufficiently during the hunger months, or in case you fall ill…” [P3 2851]. I further elaborate on sexual liaisons as important form of social insurance (or ‘social capital’) in Chapter 7.

Part and parcel
The ‘acute poverty’ claim is contested by insights that we gained through multi-annual birth statistics, women’s casual comments, and our own observations. It is furthermore contested by data, both from our own field notes and secondary sources, suggesting that gifting plays an intrinsic role in all sexual relationships – irrespective of either partner’s economic status.

I have already described that in Mudzi’s marital ‘gender contract’ a husband is required to provide all that his wife needs besides the food from her field. It follows from this that women, rather than feeling forced to offer sex in exchange for support, feel entitled to receive support when in a sexual relationship [P2 0095, 0492, 0633, 0777, 1724, 1731; P3 2138, 2651, 2900–15] (see also Hunter 2002, Leclerc-Madlala 2003, Wamoyi et al. 2010):

Two days after their first child was born, Elube’s husband left to work in town. He never returned nor sent even one bar of soap. After some time, Elube, 15 years old at the time, decided to move back to her mother. When two years later she met a man on the street who asked her whether she was married, Elube explained that her marriage had ended. He then asked her whether she had any children, Elube answered she had one indeed. The man said he was willing to take care of the child if she would marry him. Elube had been waiting for someone to propose to her ever since her first husband left, because, she states: “I was begging soap from my mother and wanted to find soap on my own.” She gratefully accepted the offer. [P3 3849]

Note that Elube perceives marriage as a way of “finding soap on her own”. Like most Mudzi women seem to do, she considered receiving support from her mother a dependency, while receiving soap from her husband a right. A man’s role as provider entails that he supplies his partner with gifts during the courting stage, and supplementary food, household items, clothes, or money during marriage. Not surprisingly, men’s promises towards prospective or newly acquired partners tend to revolve around the money or gifts that they will bring [P2 1725, 1831, 1878, 1890; P3 1862, 2689, 3963]. And, as hoped by the women accepting such relationship proposals,
men indeed often bring with them support, whether basic necessities like money, maize, relish, salt, and soap, or more luxury items like soft drinks, snacks, clothes, beauty products, even mobile phones. Benefits could also entail the payment of transport on a bike taxi instead of having to walk, or payment of grinding maize at the mill instead having to pound it by hand [e.g. P2 0492, 0766, 0992, 1584, 1600, 1643, 1733, 1893, 2060; P3 2481, 2560, 2651, 2900–15, 3841, 3843, 3847, 3852, 3990, 3996]. Those who continue to do so on a regular basis are by definition considered ‘good’ husbands [P2 0550, 1456; P3 0548, 1563, 3933, 3937, 3943, 3945, 3970, 3982, 3994, 4004, 4019, 4020].

The equation of a sexual relationship with men’s gifting is socio-culturally so deeply embedded that several informants implied that a certain man and woman were sexually involved by merely stating that “he took her to the market” [P2 2001; P3 1482, 1679]. The direct association of income with men also shows from a joke made by one elderly Mudzi widow: Pointing to the basket full of groundnuts that she kept for sale, Alma (66) commented that those were “her husband” now, as they helped her to get the things she needed [P3 4018].

Gifting and providing are thus considered part and parcel of sexual relationships in Mudzi, as is found elsewhere in Malawi10 and sub-Saharan Africa.11 When engaging with men, Mudzi women expect no less.12 Other authors point out that a woman would feel offended and face ridicule from others if she received nothing from her lover,13 and that it would be considered immoral from a man not to give gifts to his sex partner (Ankomah 1999: 299, Helle-Valle 1999: 393). Some studies among African youth found that sex and male gifting are so much expected within a relationship that boys would break up with a girl who does not ask for money or gifts, suspecting her of wanting to spread HIV (Nyanzi et al. 2001: 96), and girls would break up with a boy who aspired to abstain from sex, considering him ‘childish’ (Benesch 2011: 145). Van den Borne (2005a: 124) relates that when a

12 Several contemporary anthropologists have argued that the tradition of bridewealth may have laid the basis for the now frequently noted transactional aspect of sexual relationships in Africa (e.g. Helle-Valle 1999: 379, Hunter 2010: 190, Nobelius et al. 2010: 498–9, Wamoyi et al. 2010: 16). This would be nearly insignificant for matrilineal societies where there is no customary payment of bridewealth. Even so, the less well-defined requirement for men to show long-term commitment, through gifting and labouring in his partner’s field, before becoming properly accepted as husband or son-in-law (e.g. Richards 1969 [1940]: 77), may have had the same effect. If current-day relationships in patrilineal societies are modelled after an exchange of bridewealth for sexual access to a woman, in matrilineal societies the tradition of a man’s continued gifting to formalize a marriage bond may have led to a persistent expectation, even claiming, of male support in sexual relationships.
woman tells an unrelated man about her financial problems, it is implicated that she is actually communicating her interest in a sexual relationship with him. Rather than male-female interactions entailing direct and deliberate exchanges of material support for sex, the picture that emerges is thus one in which sex and gifting are deeply intertwined and are both no more and no less than inherent features of male-female unions. “Sex and material gifts”, Wiseman Chirwa (1997: 8) argues for relationships in Malawi, “can have the same emotional value”. As a result, gifting is also strongly interrelated with feelings of affection and love, a point to which I return further on.

Because sexual relationships grant a woman entitlement to support, they form an important means for her to increase her livelihood security. Although, as we will see further on, such direct access to support is not the only reason for women to engage in sexual relationships, I here want to make the point that women tend to play an active role in assuring such support. As providing is expected from male partners in sexual relationships (just like paying reverence, attending to household chores, and caring for children are expected from the female partner), women have a right to claim such support. We overheard some men discuss, and were told by others, that women can be very explicit and demanding about the kind of gifts and the large share of the meagre incomes they desire from their partner [P2 0095, 0492, 0633, 0777, 0924; P3 1126, 2138, 2651, 2900–15]. Telling us about ordinary village boys like himself who – contrary to businessmen from town – struggle to find a partner and keep her satisfied, Ethelo (23) explained:

“Some girls tell you exactly what they want. For example they may have seen a certain jersey at the market or on a friend, or they will say they want such-and-such shoes in this-and-this size. Then you either have to give money or buy it for her. Other girls don’t ask for anything during the first year. But in the end it is mostly the girls who decide what they want rather than boys to decide what they will give.” [P3 2138]

Some women went as far as tactically dumping one partner for another whom they expected to be more ‘profitable’ [P2 0931, 1614, 1828]. Other women confided that they feigned interest in a particular proposer so as to access his gifts for as long as possible [P2 1560, 1724, 1731; P3 2470]. Not only through such almost exploitative tactics do some women assure or optimize their access to male support; many women invest to solidify relationships too, most notably through performing the task expected from wives, but also through material investment. Some Mudzi women, for example, bought credit to make phone calls whenever their budget allowed them to stay in touch with their chibwenzi [P2 1236, 1252, 1372, 1395, 1398, 1400], or luxury foods to please him [P3 1935, 2058, 3860]. As with male gifting, such overt female investments are strongest during the courting stage of a relationship.

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(which, it should be reminded, does not only include premarital youth but also married, widowed, divorced, and abandoned women in all other age groups).

These varied examples nuance the stereotypical depiction of men forcefully demanding sex in exchange for their support and women passively succumbing. Rather, Mudzi women make a deliberate efforts to pursue and sustain relationships. Moreover, they tend to actively ensure that their sexual relationships yield material benefit, while men, often without a real source of income, may at times be the ones to suffer from the reigning transactional expectations.

Self-providing women, non-providing men
The data presented so far have challenged the narrow focus of the transactional sex paradigm, which characterizes urgent need as primary motive, basic necessities as objects of exchange, and women’s powerless as their position in the transactions. It was demonstrated that the transfers may consist of basic necessities like food and soap, or relative luxuries like hair extensions or a mobile phone, and relationships with men may serve as a direct means to resources or as an insurance against future need. Whichever the case, it was found that the material support offered by men goes a long way to explain women’s engagement in sexual relationships. So far, our data thus support the transactional sex paradigm’s focus on women’s involvement in relationships for material transfers from men. This ‘male material support’ argument fails to explain, however, all of the relationships that we encountered in Mudzi. Patricia (36), for example, earned a substantial independent income with her thriving chitenje business, yet stayed with a husband whom she described as lazy and promiscuous. Rosemary (49) accepted a proposal from the village drunkard, who would surely not contribute to the household income – more likely misuse her money for his drinking habit. Apparently, there are also other motivations for women to get involved with men besides accessing male’s material support. In the following section I discuss these complementary and alternative motivations.

Other reasons for sexual relationships
Conformity and community respect

“It’s just natural, God created a man and a woman to live together.”[P3 3203–4, also P3 3189–90, 3310–1, 3617, 3675, 3900, 4018]\(^{15}\)

Socio-cultural approaches to HIV prevention, with the explanatory ‘transactional sex’ paradigm at their centre, have often overlooked the power of convention, and the wish to conform to it. Various Mudzi women could not think of another

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\(^{15}\) The women who made such references to God were from various religious denominations, i.e. Islam, CCAP, African Continent, Jehovah’s Witness, and Zambezi Church.
reason for having accepted a marriage proposal than that it is simply natural for a woman to have a husband, and for a man to have a wife [P3 2971, 3900, 4018]. A number of women (most of them Christian, some Islamic) referred to God or the Holy Scriptures as prescribing that men and women must unite. Several women explained their acceptance of a marriage proposal by stating that they had been waiting for a man to found a family with ever since they had stopped school16 and just spent their time helping their (grand)mother in her field and in her household [P3 3627, 3904, 3945, 3994, 4009]. As girls matured, the longing for a husband and a household of their own became more pressing. At 19, Kondwani (35) felt ashamed that she was not married yet like her peers, and gladly accepted the first marriage proposal she received [P3 0515]. Other women too stated that it had simply been their time or age to get married [P3 2507, 3980, 4009, 4018].

To assess the extent to which women make divergent relationship choices when their material needs are met through other means than relationships with men, Gertrude and I sought out women with independent incomes. In total we talked to 30 small-scale businesswomen selling merchandise at one of the markets near Mudzi (multiple times, in most cases, unless they could not be found again), as well as the nurse employed at the health clinic of the nearby trading centre. Notably, these women, who managed to generate an independent income on a more-or-less regular basis, had marital and childbearing histories similar to Mudzi women without any regular source of independent income. Conversations with the income-generating women revealed that many of them married and remarried not because they lacked soap or food, which they purchased with their own money, but rather in order to be a respected member of their community. They wanted to follow conventional female behaviour and avert the risk of being portrayed or perceived as a prostitute, or as a threat to married women in the community (see also Haram 2004: 223).

One of the most successful women at the markets that we frequented was Patricia (36), who ran a thriving business of zitenje – the colourful cloth wrap that many women wear around their waist and tie their babies in. Patricia complained that her husband did not help her in any way in her business, and that he had extramarital relationships. The reason she mentioned for staying with him despite her discontent was to keep people from assuming that she gained her wealth through prostitution. When married, people could at least think that she received money and gifts from her husband – even though in reality she earned it all through her own business. [P3 0455, 0707, see also P3 3056]

Avoiding the gossip triggered by being without a partner also turned out to be an important motive for women who had no independent income (see also Schatz 2005: 486–7).

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16 In Malawi primary education is free, but secondary education is not. Many children and youngsters therefore do not continue on to secondary school, and many drop out before even reaching that stage.
Chikondi (28) told us that some months back she had married a man on the very same day that they had first met on the way to the market. This man tends to disappear to his home village during the day, only showing up in the evenings to eat and sleep. He does not support Chikondi and her children in any substantial way – only sporadically does he bring a bar of soap or some vegetables. When I asked Chikondi why she had agreed to marry this man, she explained that other women had stopped talking to her at the pump after her first husband had left her, because they suspected her of receiving their husbands in her house. Within reach for her to hear, women had told each other: “Don’t talk to her, she may steal your husband.” Quickly marrying a new man had been the only way for her to stop such gossip, she felt. She now has an extra mouth to feed, but at least is accepted again by her fellow village women. [P3 3817-9]

Rosemary (49) received repeated proposals from the village chief, which led the wife of this chief to stop talking to her, and other village women to follow the chief’s wife’s example. When Rosemary received another marriage proposal, from one of the village drunkards, she was relieved and gratefully accepted. Ever since, she and the chief’s wife were on speaking terms again. [P3 3957]

Contrary to Chikondi, who did not know whether her new husband would be a good provider or not, Rosemary was well aware of the behaviour of her new (alcoholic) husband, and the probability that he would not provide her any support. Nonetheless she accepted his proposal, and as a result was accepted again by her peers. The importance of community inclusion for future survival will be further discussed in Chapter 7 on social capital and informal safety nets.

As experienced by Chikondi, women without a partner (in the sexually active age group, it must be added) are looked upon with suspicion [P2 1534, P3 0913, 2337–8, 2507, 3056, 3149, 3272–3, 3492–3, 3606-7] (see also Campbell 2000: 486, Schatz 2005: 486, Van den Borne 2005a: 108). Especially when an unmarried woman has young children it is commonly assumed that she must be in need of a partner to help her take care of them [P3 3127–8]. Conversely, men who want to ‘taste’ a new woman are believed to hunt especially for unmarried young mothers, as these presumably want support and are therefore quick to comply [P3 2458, 3650] (see also Miller et al. 2010: 4). The relatively large number of unmarried women (probably resulting from high levels of male out-migration) thus poses a – real or imagined – threat to their married fellow village women. When the widowed Evelin (29) wore a new chitenje [P3 2295] or the abandoned Jeneti (37) ate dried fish for lunch one day, the figurative alarm bells went off throughout the village and gossip abounded about how the women may have obtained these [also P3 2850, 3041]. Several unmarried women found their house intruded by married fellow village women whose husbands had not returned home at his usual time, to check to see if he had been ‘stolen’ [P3 0608, 3606, 4018].

Teleza (28), a mother of two and without husband at the time of this conversation, explained:

“If they find money themselves, women do not need a husband. But the problem here in this village is that even if I start a business and everybody could see that I am finding my own support, still when they see you chatting with a man they say ‘Aiiiii, she is [sexually] involved with that one.’ Many women therefore force themselves to be married, so as to end such insinuations.” [P3 3056]
According to Teleza, the problem is not so much that women have no means to generate an income: they have options for this and thus do not necessarily need a husband for it. The problem is rather that having an independent income does not protect women against malicious gossip and jealousy – which can only be averted by being properly married. While Teleza says that women force themselves to be in a relationship, it seems more accurate to state that women force each other to time and again accept new relationship proposals.

Without a sexual relationship, Mudzi women thus face harassment and risk social exclusion because other women feel contempt for them and fear losing their own husband to them. Moreover, women without partner cannot easily count on support from fellow villagers, even if these are kin, because it is felt that providing material support is particularly a husband’s task. Unmarried women, it is commonly felt, should find themselves a husband to provide for them, rather than beg and expect support from others.17

When the old Sibil, nearly deaf and blind, came to beg some salt from us, she prefaced her plea with an extensive clarification of why she had no husband to turn to for salt. She was too old now, she said, to draw water for a husband to wash his body, too weak to wash his clothes, or even to have sex with him at night. Only after having defended elaborately why she had no husband from whom she could request salt, did she ask us for some. [P2 0126]

Eveles (88) was bending over deeply to remove the weeds in her rice field. Two women who passed by stopped for a chat. Instead of meanwhile helping the old woman with her heavy task, they commented that she should get herself a husband to be helped on the field. Like Sibil, Eveles objected that she could no longer take care of a husband as a wife should. [P3 1100]

Amila (33) was pushed by her brothers and uncles to accept her second husband’s proposal after her first husband had left her with a child to care for. They warned her that if she chose not to grab this opportunity, she should not expect support from them in the future [P3 3861]. Likewise, Sofia (25) was denied support by her brother in South Africa because, he argued, it was her ex-husband who gave her all those children that she now had to care for, and him that she must turn to in case of need [P2 1514].

Ideally, as gathered from the above, a woman has a husband to provide for her and their children. Conforming to this ideal brings respect, while defiance brings about both suspicion and disrespect. Numerous women referred to such community respect, or disrespect, as reason for (quickly) accepting a marriage proposal, or staying with their (unsatisfying) husband [P3 0417, 2730, 2927, 2939–42, 2979, 3115, 3293, 3308–9, 3437, 3492–3, 3580, 3608, 3900, 3923].

Male tasks

“If your house collapses, you want a husband.” (Roda, 66, divorced) [P3 3231–2]

Another reason regularly mentioned for accepting or staying with a partner – albeit often in combination with the aforementioned reasons – concerned specific tasks

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17 Obviously, when women are married they are referred to their husband for support [e.g. P2 1415].
that only men are assumed capable of [P3 0780, 3196–7, 3231–2, 3272–3, 3296–7, 3440–1, 3474–5, 3492–3, 3829, 3939, 3943, 3945, 3996]. As mentioned, husbands are supposed to build their wife a house, and preferably a separate kitchen, *bafa*, pit-latrine, and granary too. Furthermore, most Mudzi houses (and kitchens and toilets) have thatched roofs, which must be renewed annually. If, due to lack of sufficient firewood or labour power, walls are made of mud bricks that were sun-dried instead of burned, portions can be easily washed away by heavy rains if the roof is not well maintained. The grass fences that are constructed as *bafa* usually do not survive the rainy season either, nor do the twig granaries. Regular maintenance is thus required – and considered a typically male task.

Men’s physical labour is also appreciated in the fields. Whereas in the past men were charged with clearing new fields from trees and bushes (Tew 1950), this task is seldom performed anymore because the increased population size has hampered the traditional system of shifting cultivation (Mandala 1982: 30). Nowadays, men may help to make ridges, apply fertilizer and pesticides, and harvest. Mudzi men who have their own field tend to work there, sell what they harvest, and (ideally) share some of the revenues with their wives.

These physical tasks can also be carried out by a grown-up son, but they are often married elsewhere. Hired labourers could also build or maintain the necessary structures and help in the field, but many women consider it a waste of money to pay for the tasks that a husband should do for free [P3 2113, 3296–7, 3474–5]. Furthermore, as noted earlier, an unmarried woman able to hire labourers would be frowned upon and risks accusations of adultery and prostitution [P3 3041].

Love, lust, and looks
Judging from the data described so far, Mudzi women may seem calculating creatures who merely marry to safeguard their access to financial, social, or human capital. However, while pragmatic considerations undeniably play a role, so too do love, lust, and looks:

Makuta’s husband migrated to South Africa and sends regular support for her and their two children. Through this marriage, Makuta’s livelihood is reasonably secured and so is her reputation as respectable community member. The financial leeway and status as a migrant’s wife furthermore allow her to occasionally hire labourers to perform typical male duties for her household without arousing gossip. Nonetheless, Makuta (32) maintains a secret relationship with a man from one of Mudzi’s neighbouring villages. Every now and then she borrowed Gertrude’s bicycle to visit her lover, always seeming happy and excited with the prospect of meeting him again. On one of these occasions she told Gertrude that her husband had been away for almost four years, adding: “Aiiii, imagine! I cannot manage to stay without sex for so long.” On another occasion Makuta confided that she really liked her boyfriend, so much so that she longed for a baby from him. She planned to become pregnant just before her husband would return, so that she could pretend it to be his. [P2 1494, 1539, 1600, 1695, 1757; P3 2253]
The example of Makuta and her secret lover shows that not only pragmatic considerations play a role in women’s relationship choices. The various pragmatic reasons that I described in the previous sections were all well provided for through Makuta’s marriage. Something else, which I would characterize as romantic love and a desire for physical affection, drove her to engage in an additional relationship – even though this potentially endangered her highly beneficial migrant marriage. Typically, however, Makuta did not want to sacrifice this marriage, despite the strong feelings for her lover. She longed to carry his child, but preferred to raise it within her existing marital situation.

Love is a tricky topic – probably everywhere, but certainly in Mudzi, especially when regarded from a Western point of view. Whereas in the modern-day West a major classificatory difference exists between ‘liking’ and ‘loving’ someone, ChiChewa vocabulary does not contain distinct words for these emotions. Both are commonly captured by the same verb *kukonda*. This may be indicative of the different value attached to love in Western and Mudzi discourse and experience, and of the difficulties in analysing Mudzi relationships from a Western perspective. But interpreting what meanings are attributed to the concept of *kukonda* is not only complicated by this linguistic detail.

Various authors on male-female partnerships in the region assert that romantic love seldom features as an entity in itself in the relationship choices they studied (Cornwall 2002: 977, Haram 2004: 222, Mills & Ssewakiranya 2005: 92, Richards 1969 [1940]: 22, Wamoyi et al. 2010: 6). Cross-cultural studies testing the universality of romantic love found relatively little signs of it in sub-Saharan Africa (Jankowiak & Fischer 1992, Lindholm 2006). Indeed, no hints can be found in Mudzi discourse of the mythical ideal so pervasive in the West that each individual has one perfect, destined match worth waiting for. Rarely, furthermore, did Mudzi women mention affectionate emotions as the exclusive reason for their involvement in a relationship. This does not necessarily mean, however, that passionate attractions are absent. As the case of Makuta reveals, such emotions do occur [see also P2 0766, 1135, 1701; P3 0844, 4006, 4007]. Her case also illustrates, however, that these are often granted a less prominent role than pragmatic concerns, and as a result may be locally considered unworthy or even inappropriate to mention.

I have relatively little data about women’s extramarital relationships such as that of Makuta, who volunteered this information herself. Although we interviewed all Mudzi women about their past and present relationships, and some told us about

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18 Alternative words include *kufuna*, which literally means ‘to want’ and can be used to express a desire for someone; *kugomera* translates as ‘admiring’ or ‘feeling attracted’, and might come closest to the English ‘being in love’; *chikondi chogonana* means something like ‘sleeping-together-love’, which however need not indicate any affectionate feelings; and the noun *mkomya* could be translated as ‘fondness’, referring particularly to (material) attentiveness between persons (Tirza Schipper, personal communication, Oct 3 2012).
(past) extramarital partners [P2 1208; P3 1804]. I suspect that most women limited their accounts to publicly recognized relationships (and probably even omitted many of these too). This is noteworthy because it could be hypothesized that extramarital relationships are more prominently driven by affectionate emotions than marital relationships. This may be so because, as in the case of Makuta, when a woman opts to take an extra partner rather than switch partners, she is most likely reasonably well provided for by her husband, and thus need not necessarily seek this in her other partner. Furthermore, women’s involvement in extramarital relationships is far less accepted then men’s, so that women must be secretive about it. Logically then, a woman cannot receive substantial gifts from her lover, let alone have him work in her field or compound, as this will surely raise suspicion. These factors make it seem reasonable to assume that attraction more often plays a (decisive) role in extramarital relationships than in marital relationships. It must be taken into account that the following analysis is largely based on women’s reports and our observations of publicly overt relationships.

As described, most relationships come about quickly, without partners actually getting to know each other – which generally precludes romantic feelings from fully developing. Free marital choice tends to be associated with a proliferation of romantic love as the basis for marriage (Rosenblatt & Cozby 1972, Sorrell 2005). This seems not to be the case in Mudzi. Although couples do not take time to let feelings grow before marrying, some appraisal is done by the women and most likely by men as well, and some level of attraction or liking is appreciated [P3 3863, 3889, 3998, 4002, 4005], as in the following example:

Victoria (now 26) related how a girl with whom she was chatting asked her whether she would be interested to marry her brother. At the time, Victoria, who had never been married and still lived with her mother, told the girl that she wanted to see the brother before deciding. A meeting was set up and Victoria agreed to marry because, she accounts, the boy was ready to marry her, and he “pleased her/made her happy” [anandisangalatsidwa] during their first meeting. The couple married a week later. [P3 3889]

Only a few times did women say that they were or had been in a certain relationship because they liked or loved their partner, and it is striking that these remarks always concerned their first intimate relationship [P3 3833, 3915, 3929, 3998, 4002, 4006, 4007]. Overhearing women discuss amongst each other their contemporary relationship choices also suggests that attraction and affection were expressed as decisive factors almost exclusively by adolescent women. Practically all insisted on at least seeing their proposer before deciding whether or not to accept [P2 0176; P3 0530, 3889, 3893]. Upon merely seeing him many women agreed to be in a relationship. One of these women explained that she had interpreted the attraction she felt at first sight to indicate that “our blood was matching”, which was reason enough for her to accept a marriage proposal [P3 0530, see also P3 3889]. Throughout our stay in Mudzi several youngsters, furthermore, declared that they rejected a proposing
man because they “did not like him” [P2 0766, 1400, 1586, 1740, 1831; P3 0448, 1797, 3885], blaming for example his bad smell [P2 1586], ugly clothes [P2 1831], or unattractive face [P2 1296]. It appears that affection and attraction as such only play a decisive role, or are condoned to play a decisive role, in the early phases of some women’s lives. Hence, when they still live with and are reasonably cared for by their (grand) mother, when their respectability does not yet depend on a married status, and when, because of these factors, they are not yet considered serious competitors on the marital market. This corresponds with those ethnographic studies that found (aspiration for) love to be a significant factor in the relationship choices of their rural African informants, focused particularly on premarital relationships of youngsters (e.g. Nnko et al. 2001, Poulin 2007, Stoebenau et al. 2011).

Most prime-aged women – with children to care for, a household to run, and a field to cultivate – reveal a far more pragmatic approach to relationships and try to advise or even pressure youngsters to make what they consider wiser choices [P2 1740, 1745, 1825, 2044; P3 1636].

Dorica (15) is one of the few adolescent Mudzi girls attending school. She lives with her mother who occasionally trades crops and foodstuff, and an elder brother who performs *ganyu* when the family needs money. During our fieldwork period a young man visiting his friend in Mudzi proposed marriage to Dorica. The women who came to knit with us that afternoon, all in their twenties and thirties, felt that she should accept, because the proposer had a job and was also involved in trading. “She won’t be able to find school fees [to continue her education],” one argued. Another added that there are no jobs to be found even if she would manage to finish school. This man, all felt, would be her best bet for a secure future [P3 1636]. Dorica doubted, however. She had felt ready for marriage, but this was not the kind of guy she envisioned herself with. She preferred to continue her education – which is commonly considered incompatible with marriage, as a husband needs someone to care for him at home, and pregnancy would soon keep her tied to the house anyway [also P3 4104]. Dorica’s mother, who for two consecutive years had made the effort to gather money for Dorica’s secondary school fees, now strongly urged her daughter to choose marriage over education and accept the employed man’s proposal. When she eventually threatened to no longer pay Dorica’s school fees – out of genuine concern for her daughter’s future, as far as I can judge – the girl obeyed, dropped out, and married. [P2 1744]

It seems that throughout life women are taught, by others and by the harsh circumstances they face, to value livelihood security over romantic feelings. This socialization process may help to explain why most women tended to emphasize, to me and to each other, the material grounds for being in a relationship – which does not foreclose, notably, that these women have and are guided by emotional preferences too.

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Grasping the role that love and affection play in women’s relationship choices is further complicated by the fact that emotional attachment is deeply intertwined with material factors [P2 1518, 1553, 1588, 1589, 1704; P3 0863, 2172, 2462, 3968].

While knitting one afternoon Tumanene (26) told us about her husband who works in South Africa. Livia (21) then commented: “Your husband loves you, because he was buying some hair extensions for you, and now that he is in South Africa he sends you money.” Tumanene smiled, and said: “Yes, it is true”[P2 1518]. Later, Makuta (31), whose husband also migrated to South Africa, lamented: “Please listen to me, I miss my husband!” Tumanene replied: “Even myself, every night I look at his picture and some tears come out when I remember his face and the way that he was loving me, buying everything that I wanted and working in the field together.” [P2 1553]

A man’s love for his wife is measured by his compliance with the duties expected from a husband: fulfilling his wife’s material needs and wishes, and helping her with the heavy physical tasks around her house and in her field. Taking up the plight of financially caring for a partner in a setting that is economically highly insecure like Mudzi is considered and valued as a manifestation of love20 [P2 1518, 1553, 1589, 1704; P3 2172, 2462]. In return, such dedication from a man to his partner may in itself trigger affectionate feelings from her. Male support, both material and physical, is thus not only an expression and indication of love, but can, as Cornwall (2002: 977) has also argued, actually produce love. Looking back on our time in Mudzi, Gertrude believes there was ‘love’ only between three of the couples. Rather than taking this as a fact (I think I saw signals of being ‘in love’ among others than these three), the criterion that Gertrude uses is telling. She concluded that there must have been love in these relationships because the husbands provided substantially to their wives instead of dividing the relatively large wealth they had access to between several partners.

In sum, when one Mudzi girl lamented that her boyfriend had stopped giving her money [P2 0615], this need not have been merely a regret about the loss of income. Most probably, through this statement, she also communicated her concern about his fading love or at least interest in her. In other words, reading from women’s frequent comments on economic transfers that this is all they care for ignores the symbolic value that such transfers can have for them besides their material value.

It seems safe to say that where there is gifting (between a non-related man and woman), there is sex21 – and where there is sex, there is gifting. This does not mean, however, that whenever there are sex and gifting, there is love (see also Chirwa & Chizimbi 2009: 20). Love is longed for in a relationship, and considered an important ingredient for a long-lasting, stable marriage [P2 1605; P3 0824, 1208, 3223–4, 3923]. It is, however, not considered a prerequisite for entering a chibwenzi

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relationship or marriage – as demonstrated in the previous subsections. Rather, it is generally considered to arise from and be nurtured by the caring behaviour of both partners – a woman preparing her partner’s favourite meal, a man bringing household necessities before his partner asks for it, and helping to cultivate her field without complaint [e.g. P2 1606; P3 2507, 2676, 3860]. Some Mudzi women stated that such love usually lasts only from “just after marriage until the first child is born” [P2 1605; P3 0844, 3191], while others believe that it is something that grows when spouses persist in their commitment to each other and their household over an extended period of time [P3 2507, 2752].

Possibly related to the emotion of love is the motivation of revenge, which two Mudzi women mentioned as reason for engaging in a relationship [P2 1208, 1636, see also 1058] (see also Chirwa & Chizimbi 2009: 55, Tawfik & Watkins 2007: 1096). Both women felt hurt and angry upon finding out that their husband was having sexual relations with another woman, and took on a temporary lover to get even with their (to-this-day) husband.

Besides love and looks, sexual lust too plays an ambivalent role in women’s relationship choices. A few women hinted that their own feelings of lust drove them [P2 0158, 1539, 1600; P3 0790] (see also Chirwa & Chizimbi 2009: 39–41). More often, however, women mentioned it when I asked whether they thought that women in general would still want a husband if they could generate their own income. Some resolutely answered that in such case a woman should not need nor want a husband [P3 2935, 3164, 3190, 3230, 3400, 3499, 3640]. Most others noted one or more of the reasons discussed above for women’s preference to be in a relationship even if she has an independent income [P3 3005-6, 3056, 3102, 3204, 3293, 3379, 3416, 3441, 3456, 3475, 3606, 3617, 3629, 3651, 3675]. And several women pointed to a natural, uncontrollable desire for sex [P 3075, 3148, 3255, 3269, 3441, 3443, 3536–7, 3596, 3617, 3664]. One of them, married and in her fifties, empathetically remarked that: “Well, for example, it is difficult for a woman to build a house. But even if you manage to get everything done by yourself, there always remains one thing that you cannot do alone…” [P3 3350].

Most other women who suggested sex as reason for women with independent incomes to engage in relationships with men sounded more judgemental about it. As will be further elaborated in Chapter 6, sex has throughout Bantu history been valued as vital to individual, conjugal, and community wellbeing. Nonetheless, casual comments from Mudzi women suggest that too explicit an appetite for sex is disapproved of in women [P2 1124, 1417; P3 2166, 3367-8]. Other scholars of male-female relationships in the region have also noted that engaging in sex for pleasure

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21 For material related to villagers and Gertrude concluding that a certain girl or woman must be involved in a sexual relationship based on her visible access to resources, see P2 1524, 1787; P3 1340, 1571, 2302, 2337, 2341, see also P3 2253.
is considered unfit for women22 (e.g. Cornwall 2002: 965–6, Nobelius et al. 2010: 490). By claiming that women who are sufficiently livelihood secure can have no other reason to be involved with men than to satisfy their sexual desire, some of my informants thus insinuated that such women must by definition be driven by lust. This potentially negative conclusion too may help to explain why women tend to underline time and again that they entered a relationship (or series of relationships) because of dire need – a point to which I return further on.

Interestingly – and surprisingly, considering the high value attached to motherhood – only one woman explicitly noted that a desire to beget children may be a reason for women to accept relationship proposals [P3 3475]. Theoretically, relationships are no prerequisite for procreation. The lack of emphasis on the aspect of reproduction may indicate that in daily life practice, too, relationships are defined by the very fact that there is more to a union than mere reproduction.

Frequent divorce and remarriage

“The problem with men here,” commented Pamela (27), “is that the first days they are very serious about loving you, but soon they will just leave you at home wondering where to find food.” [P3 0844, see also P3 0871, 3191]

The high rate at which men and women change partners is the second ‘risky’ relationship practice to be discussed in this chapter. Pamela’s complaint about the quick dissolving of relationships in Mudzi is confirmed by studies that found divorce rates to be comparatively high among matrilineal groups in general,23 including those in Malawi.24 Summarizing the reasons mentioned in the literature for the fragility of matrilineal marriage bonds, Amy Kaler (2001: 531) lists 1) the perception that men are torn between their natal village and that of their wife, 2) the absence of bridewealth payments to solidify the marriage, 3) cultural ideologies that prioritize the brother-sister bond over the husband-wife bond, 4) the relatively high status of women enabling them to easily send off an unsatisfactory husband, and 5) the persistence of male out-migration in searching for employment. Not all of these seem sufficiently backed by empirical evidence, however. Arguably, statements one and three may in theory apply to patrilineal societies as well, in which case it is the women who are emotionally torn between their natal village and the village of their children, and in which the lineage bond may also be prioritized over the marital bond. So while these attributes may well underlie marriage instability, they seem insufficient to explain why divorce rates would

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22 Such a repressive female sexual morality has been linked to Christian influences in Africa (e.g. Ahlberg 1994, Arnfred 2007). I dare not say to what extent this is the case in Mudzi. In the next chapter I elaborate upon sexual mores and practices.


be highest in matrilineally organized societies. Lesley Noonan (1979) compared ethnographic data on 442 ‘preliterate’ societies regarding conditions that are in the social science literature often mentioned as affecting divorce rates. Of the tested variables, only matrilocal residence after marriage was found on its own to predict greater marriage instability. Post-marital matrilocal residence may be associated with arguments one, four, and five (although this last is strongly related to other factors too, as argued in Chapter 2). The argument that the custom of bridewealth increases marital stability is not supported by Noonan’s cross-cultural study, nor by Gibbs who notes that marriage payments are at times just (fruitless) attempts to counter high levels of marriage instability (Gibbs 1963: 558).

Georges Reniers (2003) calculated that divorce probabilities in Malawi are among the highest on the continent (ranging from 45 to 60 percent per lifetime), and within Malawi are highest in the (largely matrilineally organized) Southern Region. This is in line with the outcome of comparisons based on ethnicity rather than locality, which found that throughout Africa no ethnic group was recorded to have a divorce ratio higher than the Yao (Bleek 1975: 192, Barnes 1949). Based on a longitudinal data set, Reniers (2003: 189) estimates that in rural Balaka about one-third of first marriages ends in divorce even before the fifth anniversary, and almost two-thirds dissolve within 25 years. Of all divorced women in rural Balaka 70 percent remarries within three years after divorce, and 90 percent is remarried within eight years (Reniers 2003: 194).

My elderly Mudzi informants attribute the high relationship turnover to the increasingly loose morals of current-day youth. One woman in her sixties commented that youngsters these days “get husbands like they are getting tomatoes at the market” [amangotola mwamuna ngati tomato pamsika] [P3 3003]. Kaler (2001) however found that the very same discourse on loosening morals and increasing divorce rates prevailed in interviews conducted in the same research area in the late 1940s, when today’s elderly were young (see also Vaughan 1987). While this

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25 The tested variables are bridewealth, household organization (independent or extended), type of union (polygamous or monogamous), post-marital residence, settlement patterns, subsistence activities, division of labour, and religious practices.
26 The divorce ratio is defined as a percentage of all completed marriages, estimated at 68 percent among the Yao.
27 These data form part of the Malawi Diffusion and Ideational Change Project (MDICP) described in Chapter 3.
28 Younger women too at times complained that “men these days” do not want to commit themselves to a serious relationship [P2 0177, 1131; P3 3252].
29 Several Mudzi elderly women attributed the disobedience of contemporary youth towards the traditional authority of community elders to newly introduced concepts like ‘democracy’, ‘freedom of speech’, and ‘gender equality’ [e.g. P3 0953]. I return to point this in Chapter 6.
30 These interviews are described in unpublished records of James Clyde Mitchell, which are archived in the Rhodes Library at Oxford University.
might point to a progressive volatility of partnerships, Kaler rather interprets it as
a consistency in the invoking of an invented idyllic past. Indeed, many of Mudzi’s
elderly women had themselves behaved in ways which they now condemned, for
example marrying before they were properly matured (when their “breasts were
still small”) [P3 0366, 1326, 3962, 4021], remarrying several times [P3 0608, 0703, 2206,
4104], having extramarital relationships [P2 1208; P3 1804], and conceiving children
with men other than their husbands [P3 1804] [see also P2 1692]. Mitchell (1956:
186) estimated in 1956 that at his research site near Mudzi, 80 percent of men and
women over the age of 40 had been through at least one divorce – which suggests
that marriage instability has been fairly stable over at least the past half century.

In Mudzi, relationships tend to be dissolved as casually as they were begun.
Notwithstanding Pamela’s earlier-quoted complaint about men’s tendency to
quickly abandon a new partner, women can do so too, as she did herself:

On their way to the pump, Gertrude brought up the rumour she heard about Pamela’s brief
marriage. Pamela confirmed that she had gotten married and divorced within three weeks,
elaborating that: “I worked alone in the field and he helped me only for a week. Then I just
told him ‘Basi, banja latha, dzipitani’ [Enough, our marriage is over, you must go], then he
just packed and left.” [P2 1225]

If the marriage bond had been formalized (by appointing matrilineal relatives
as marriage counsellors and making a payment to the chief), upon divorce it must
be formally dissolved. For this, both spouses must again go to the chief with their
ankhoswe to have him or her write a letter of divorce [P2 1652; P3 1856, 2297, 3199-
3200]. The ankhoswe then decide on division of the couple’s properties [e.g. P3
1723] – the children, house, and field in principle remain with the woman (see also
Mwambene 2005: 16–8), while the man is encouraged to continue supporting his
children on an occasional basis [e.g. P3 1723, 3996]. As Pamela lamented, however,
some men simply disappear and do not return, leaving their wives uncertain about
their marital status [e.g. P3 0546, 1501, 1856, 3821, 3959, 3766, 3998], and unauthorized31
to formally remarry [P3 1856, 2297]. While a married woman must first formally
divorce before she can marry another man, a man can be married to several wives.
When he only visits another woman during daytime, but continues to spend the
nights with his wife, he is considered to have an extramarital girlfriend. When he
starts to spend some nights at the other woman’s house, the man is considered to
have two wives. These men divide their nights between the various households
[e.g. P3 0766, 3891, 3913].

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31 Some husbands send a notification to their wife after disappearing, informing her that their marriage
has ended and granting her permission to look for a new partner [P3 0705]. Even without such formal
notification, a chief can decide to allow an abandoned woman to divorce unilaterally if he or she finds
this reasonable [P3 2297].
Men are generally perceived as instigating divorce\(^{32}\) quicker and more often than women [P2 1604; P3 3185, 3247–8, 3264–5, 3410-1, 3593, 3672], and as soon as they are slightly unsatisfied with her behaviour. According to some Mudzi women, men just find themselves another wife, and leave – usually in that order [P2 0125; P3 2889, 3854]. In practice, obviously, not all men are so quick to depart. One Mudzi man compared his (quarrelsome) marriage to football: “Sometimes you fall, but then you just get up and continue, still enjoying the game” [P3 2753]. Nonetheless, numerous Mudzi women relate that their ex-partners simply left one day without giving any reason, and never returned [e.g. P3 0546, 1040, 3766, 3772, 3900, 3902, 3962, 3963, 3994]. Not seldom did this departure coincide with childbirth [P2 0144, 0160, 1605, 1638, 1883, 1940; P3 0505, 0698, 0780, 0871, 1729]. Local custom prohibits couples from having sex in the months after delivery,\(^{33}\) which prompts some men to (temporarily) move in with another woman. Furthermore, as described earlier, various Mudzi men left their wife and her children when the responsibility of providing became too difficult [P2 1178, 1221; P3 1729], as did Rosemary’s fifth husband:

Barely half a year had her latest husband lived with Rosemary (49) in the small house that she shares with her three youngest children and four grandchildren. When times became harsh and food scarce, the man left the cramped house, and explained that: “I know how to cook, and I always manage to find food for myself, only not for the big family, that’s why I divorced.” [P2 1178]

Notably, one of the Mudzi men who did stick with his wife and her children throughout each hunger season was explicitly praised for this by other Mudzi women, which reveals how uncommon this is for men [P2 1624].

Other reasons for divorce offered by men include discontent with the disrespectful or quarrelsome behaviour of a wife [P2 0128, 1518, 2133; P3 1231, 3650, 3809, 3963], or her failure to produce (healthy) children [P2 0157; P3 0506, 3854, 4012]. From this last reason it appears that at least some men, or men under certain circumstances, value having offspring, even though this does not benefit their own lineage and does not seem to hold back many men from abandoning this offspring later in life. It is likely that providing a woman with (many strong) children confirms a man’s masculinity and may at least therefore be desired. A child, furthermore,

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\(^{32}\) Like my use of the term ‘marriage’ – which in line with the local Mudzi use refers to both formal and informal unions, I use the term ‘divorce’ to designate separations of both formal and informal unions.

\(^{33}\) In southern Malawi there is no specified duration of the period of post-partum abstinence, but it generally lasts until the child can crawl and stand (Zulu 2001: 475–6). On average it is practiced for 6.5 months in this region (which is longer than in the Central and Northern Regions, where it lasts 3.1 and 4.9 months respectively) (GoM 2011a: 84). Intercourse can only be resumed after the performance of a ritual that I further discuss in Chapter 6 on sex and HIV. The length of the post-partum abstinence seems to be diminishing, possibly due to biomedical demystification of the perceived ancestral sanctions against defiance (Chirwa & Chizimbii 2009: 61–2) or an increased need felt by women to hold on to their partner (Zulu 2001: 477).
tends to solidify a relationship, and may be ‘requested’ by a man to both assess and strengthen his new partner’s commitment towards him [e.g. P3 0871]. As we shall see further on, children create a bond between otherwise unrelated co-parents that they can (legitimately but not necessarily successfully) fall back on even after break up. When many, or even all, of a couple’s children die, this may moreover be interpreted as bad omen, signalling bewitchment, disease, or both [e.g. P2 0040; P3 0555], and for this reason too be cause for divorce.

Women are considered to have more at stake and therefore try harder to make their marriage last [P3 3264–6, 3410–1, 3593]. They cannot, like men, easily acquire a new partner, but instead must wait for someone willing to propose to them [e.g. P3 3002, 3264-5]. If they have children it may be difficult to find another man prepared to take care of them. Women’s perceived need for men’s economic and physical support has already been described in depth, as has their need for marriage in order to be considered a respected community member. Furthermore, some Mudzi women rationalized that it cannot be known beforehand whether a new husband will be any better [e.g. P3 2795, 3900]. A few women mentioned fear of abuse or bewitchment as reason for not instigating divorce when unhappy with a husband [P3 2933, 3053, 3581].

When dissatisfied with their husband’s behaviour, some women therefore choose to accept it [e.g. P2 1604; P3 2999–3000, 3264–6, 3900, 3913]. Others try to change it through discussions with him, angry outbursts, or outright threats [P2 1208–10, 1499, 1796; P3 3790]. Some also pay a sorcerer to magically encourage their husband’s desired behaviour and discourage his disliked activities [e.g. P2 1405, 1484, 1910]. If these measures fail, women turn to their ankhoswe for advice and support (see also Schatz 2005) [P3 3283–4, 3410–1, 3449–50, 3579]. These ankhoswe then talk to the unruly husband on behalf of his wife. Mitchell (1962: 37) writes: “If marriages do not run as smoothly as they ought to, the marriage sureties [ankhoswe] are often put to some discomfort in trying to persuade, cajole and browbeat their kinsmen into more acceptable behaviour.” When the ankhoswe too fail to better the man, women are free to “chase away” their husband [P3 3371]. Although I have no means of knowing with certainty how often in total my informants had been abandoned and how often they had sent off a husband, the cases that I do know of seem to be equally divided between the two scenarios. Women’s frequent resort to divorce reveals their relatively good fall-back position: indeed, they maintain their entitlements to land, own a house, and often have means to generate an independent income if need be.

Mudzi women’s wish to divorce most often stemmed from what they considered to be insufficient commitment from their husband to their household. “He stopped

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34 Women’s independent income-generating options will be further elaborated upon in Chapter 8.
taking care,” many say, some elaborating further that he just stayed at home, expecting to be catered to, while neglecting to help in the field, earn money, or maintain the compound [P2 0645, 1232, 1480, 1614, 1828; P3 0729, 1603, 3073–4, 3145–6, 3228, 3663, 3823, 3978, 3998; P8 0085, 0087]. Some divorced explicitly because they found a better provider [P2 0931, 1614, 1828]. About half of the women who decided to end their marriage did so because their husband began to have or persisted in having relationships with other women [P2 0177, 1409, 1480, 1756; P3 3439, 3663, 3766, 3790, 3809, 3893, 3978, 3996]. Women who declined relationship proposals often say they did so because the man was already married to another woman [P2 0275; P3 0418, 0532, 0609, 2236, 3438-9]. Livia (21), for example, told a married man who proposed to her: “I cannot manage to stay with a man with two wives because when buying relish it means you will be dividing it into two parts, when buying a chitenje, dividing it. I don’t want that” [P2 0275]. In line with Livia’s statement, women’s main argument to problematize polygyny and promiscuity is that it entails sharing a man’s resources (including physical labour) with his other partners [see also P2 0521, 1805; P3 0943]. “Then it becomes difficult to get enough,” explained Dora (42) [P3 3996]. Fear of AIDS, or diseases in general, too makes women apprehensive of promiscuous husbands [P2 1548; P3 2340, 2943–4, 3909], although, as we shall see in Chapter 6, this reason is often secondary to other considerations.

Notably, polygyny and promiscuity do not necessarily lead to divorce. Where the support provided by a husband remains substantial enough (e.g. from those employed in town or South Africa), women tend to overlook his adultery [P2 1561, 1893; P3 0841, 2329, 2340, 2468]. Other women, especially those who had some form of independent income, value their status as married woman more than they mind the reduced support from their polygynous or promiscuous husband, and thus prefer to stay married [e.g. P3 0417, 0706–7]. One woman said that she does not want to divorce her husband, who hurts her by spending much of his time (and resources) with his other household, not only because she prefers to stay respectfully married, but also because she loves him [P3 3913].

Additional reasons that women cited as grounds for divorce are violence [P2 1212, 1548; P3 0608, 3817, 3915; P8 0089], alcohol abuse [P2 0645; P3 1603, 3227–8; P8 0089], and signs of witchcraft [P2 1212; P3 0784, 3662, 3939, 3949].

In no case did a Mudzi woman complain about – let alone want to divorce – a husband who supported her sufficiently [e.g. P3 3225-6].35 This, again, should not be interpreted as indicating that women are only after material gain. Rather, in a

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35 Possible exceptions are the one woman who instigated divorce after all of her eight children had died and a consulted diviner claimed that it had been her husband who bewitched them [P3 3939], and two adolescent girls who got so fed up with the insatiable sexual lust of their new husbands that they chose to move back into their parental home [P2 1586; P3 0757, 1462]. In these cases the husband MAY have been a good provider, but I do not know whether he indeed was.
harsh environment like that of Mudzi, a man who is willing to work in his wife’s field, diligently look for (scarce, arduous, and low-paid) labour opportunities, and sacrifice the fruits of this to his wife’s household is by definition a good (we might say *loving* and *loved*) husband.

Interestingly, relationship break-ups are instigated by Mudzi women whether or not they have an alternative source of income at that moment [e.g. *P3 0523*]. As we shall see in Chapter 8, women’s income-generating activities depend on their marital status, and not vice versa. It appears, from this and the above, that while economic motives are an important aspect of women’s reasons to end a relationship, these are certainly not the only nor necessarily decisive factors – as found earlier, too, regarding women’s reasons to accept proposals.

Whereas women of the prime-age group – those with young children – feel pressured to have a husband and are therefore at a relatively disadvantaged position vis-à-vis men, the tables turn when men and women approach the elderly age group:

Alma (66), whom I classified among Mudzi’s ‘best off’, has declined all proposals she received after her third husband disappeared with the money they had earned by selling their cotton. “Men only disturb you,” she feels, “they may not help you on your field, yet eat your harvest.” When chatting with her and her elder (widowed) sister one afternoon, they argued that they were better off without husband, explaining that: “We have children that take care of us. Now if we slaughter a chicken, we can keep it all to ourselves instead of sharing it with a husband!” [P3 2120, see also *P2 1624; P3 1101, 3369–70*]

Being beyond child-bearing and -rearing age, and sufficiently taken care of by their adult children, Alma and her sister were not considered a threat to the marriages of other women. They were therefore no longer harassed and pushed into new relationships by the envy of fellow village women. Men, on the other hand, have less physical strength to generate money or perform their traditional tasks of building and maintaining the compound when they grow older, and can therefore less easily find a new partner [P3 1534]. Thus, while women’s need for a husband diminishes, men become more dependent on their current wives for access to field, food, and fireplac

The longer relationships last, however, the less acceptable it becomes to divorce [P3 3308–9, 3427–8, 3478–9]. A woman who after many years of marriage wants to send off her husband is publicly criticized for “wanting to eat their children’s support alone” [P2 1624; P3 3427–8, 3478–9]. As discussed earlier, marriages in this area were never sealed by one single ceremony, but rather by a series of events throughout the union. In this light, only couples that survive the ravages of time – that begot children together, planted seeds and picked the fruits together – may be perceived as really married. During the years-long ‘testing period’ or preamble to real marriage, a break-up is justified for many reasons, but the longer a couple stays together, the more solidified and unbreakable their relationship becomes. Our long-wed neighbour, as several other Mudzi men, simply refused to go whenever
his wife got so fed up with his behaviour that she wanted to divorce, pleading that he had stood by her side for many years and had nowhere else to go [P2 1204, see also P3 0702, 1804, 2028, 3314–5, 3328–9, 3583, 3849, 3992]. Some wives left it at this, in some cases saying that they “pitied” their husband for not having any place else to go to, therefore continuing to care for him. Others persisted and eventually managed to rid themselves of an unwanted, stubborn husband – by continuing to express their complaints to the ankhoswe, and ultimately paying the chief so as to enforce a divorce [P3 1534, 1603, 1614, 2028, 3998, 4018]. Tellingly, the few elderly women who were happy with their long-time husbands all are in the group that I classified as ‘best of’.

• Relationships as individual endeavours

Because the marriage bond in Mudzi is generally fragile, unreliable, and short-lived both men and women seem to consider it a vehicle for personal improvement rather than a shared endeavour – despite the common expression that marriage revolves around ‘helping each other’. There is great mutual distrust between spouses, much secrecy, and little solidarity (see also Forster 2001: 247). As noted and further elaborated upon in Chapter 8, women have ways to access money through other means than relationships with men. And when they do, married women tend to keep this or the exact amount they gather secret from their husband [P3 1903] (see also Peters 1997b: 203). Likewise, men too prefer to hide their exact earnings [P2 1618; P3 1903, 2943–4, 3310–1, 3468–9].

Saida (28, married, five children) does not know how much salary her husband receives for his job at a motel in the adjacent district, he just sends her some money every now and then. Saida explains that many spouses “amabisa” [hide from each other what they earn]. Otherwise, she says, their partner may be begging or even demanding too much of it. She herself did tell her husband that she took out a 10,000 MK loan, because she may need his help in paying back the instalments. [P3 1903, see also P2 0095]

This tendency of spouses to scrupulously protect their separate budgets has been noted throughout Africa (Guyer 1984, Peters 1997b: 203, Poewe 1981: 80, Richards 1939: 133, Sudarkasa 1986: 101, Vaughan 1987: 130).

In line with this, Mudzi spouses who both own land tend to cultivate these individually, each working in their own field [P3 0706, 1432, 3468–9, 4012; P8 0002]. Some husbands add their maize yield to the household granary, others sell all their produce as it is their wife’s obligation to feed them anyway – ideally sharing some of the revenue with her in return.

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36 Some women suggested that such men use traditional medicine to assure that their wives will not persist or succeed in enforcing divorce [P3 3315, 3615].

37 This amount was equivalent of 50 Euro at the time of the research.
Suspicion between spouses intensifies around harvest time, when their – individual or joint – labour in the fields becomes materialized, and thus snatchable. A general fear persists among Mudzi women that their husband will run off with all or part of their cotton revenues, which they as wives feel entitled to because they have fed him throughout the year or have even helped grow the cotton [P3 2791, 2943–4, 2951–2, 2999–3000, 3310–1, 3468–9, 3613]. Various men indeed disappeared after receiving the cotton proceeds, some under the pretence of a fight with their wife, only to return after having spent all money [P2 2024; P3 0550, 3088–94, 3766, 4018] (see also Bryceson et al. 2004: 26). Rosemary (49), for example, complained that her husband:

“... already sold his cotton [which she helped him to cultivate on his field] and he didn’t give me any money. I [also] helped him to grow tomatoes, but he sold them by himself. And then he left me. … His aim was to eat alone what we harvested. He now says that he wants to be back with me but I told him that I don’t want to. As of now he has sold everything including [some of] our maize.” [P3 3088–94]

Not only cash crops generate tensions, maize does too. Although the maize stored rarely suffices to feed a family until the next harvest, men and women alike try to gain some personal benefit from it before it all disappears. When knitting one afternoon towards the end of the hunger season, Molly (26) remarked:

“We are about to start eating green maize. During harvest time many women put some maize in a tin with clothes on top, cheating their husband [by saying] that she is going to wash her clothes or blanket at the pump, while going somewhere else to sell. And with the money they just buy biscuits or mandasi3 but not relish because her husband may ask where she got the money. And the husband also steals some maize to sell and with the money they go to buy kachasu [a locally brewed gin]. They all forget that they were sleeping without eating any food.” [P2 1274]

As forecasted by Molly, in the weeks that followed numerous married women and men secretly came to offer us maize for sale, stressing that we should not tell their spouse [P2 1504, 1565, 1582, 1583, 1590, 1611,1635, 1761]. Gertrude wrote down:

I saw Hamra [age 58] carrying a tin as if she was going to fetch some water while coming to sell some maize and it was 8kgs 200 MK. She told me that: My husband is the one who told me to sell the maize in order to buy pain killers because he is not getting better, but please tell him that it was 100MK not 200MK. Tomorrow I will come to sell for 500MK, I want to buy a chitenje, but please don’t tell him. [P2 1583]

Several days later, Hamra’s husband showed up with a tin of maize too, and Gertrude wrote:

[Hamra’s husband] came to sell 12kg = 370 at 30mk/kg. Then he told me that now I am getting better, I cheated my wife that I am not getting better because I didn’t want to help her harvesting and I wanted to have a chance of coming to sell maize here, he laughed. [P2 1611]

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38 A ‘mandasi’ is a local pastry.
Husbands and wives can never be sure of their spouses’ commitment to their partnership and not rely on his or her sustained support. This reinforces and is reinforced by each spouse’s prioritization of their individual agendas. In response to this reality, Mudzi villagers found ways to cover their needs, in more or less subtle ways, both within marriage and by changing or even combining partners. This navigating of both men and women between different partners is further analysed in the following section.

Relational overlap
There is yet another aspect that makes relationship practices in Mudzi risky in a context of high HIV prevalence. Besides quickly entering into sexual relationships with often-unknown partners and the frequent exchange of partners, there is a high incidence of concurrent partnerships. In Chapter 2 I mentioned that overlapping sexual relationships greatly facilitate the transmission of HIV and are considered an important driver of the AIDS pandemic in sub-Saharan Africa.

I have also mentioned that a reliable quantification of sexual concurrency is difficult to obtain. As one indication of the level of sexual concurrency, the 2004 MDICP survey found that in Balaka 32 percent of women and 24 percent of men said they had been in a polygynous marriage (Reniers & Tfaily 2008: 1816). However, the definitions of marriage and polygyny that were used are not mentioned, and the reliability of the data is only sparsely problematized. As far as I know at least one-fifth of Mudzi’s husbands do not spend all nights with their Mudzi wife. We know with certainty that one-tenth of all Mudzi women were, at the time of our fieldwork, simultaneously involved in sexual relationships with at least two and sometimes more men. All these numbers, both those from Balaka in general and Mudzi in particular, refer to active sexual relationships. I will argue further on that such active concurrent relationships, the amount of which is likely to be underestimated anyway, are only part of a larger constellation of partnership overlap.

In line with the unclear demarcations between chibwenzi and banja relationships, the distinction between formal polygamy and informal extramarital relationships is vague. Mudzi villagers are relatively quick to classify a relationship as marriage – in practice, as soon as a man starts to spend some nights at his partner’s house. Following local terminology, then, many concurrent relationships should be called ‘polygamous’ rather than ‘extramarital’. More specifically, these relationships must be called ‘polygynous’ – as only men can actually spend their nights at various houses. Women may maintain multiple sexual relationships, but in theory cannot spend a night at their partner’s house as he has none.39 Besides this practical

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39 I have not heard of cases in which a man invited other women into the house of his wife (although the migrant men who built their own house in town or Mudzi sometimes did sleep with women other than
obstacle, it is culturally not considered an option for women to be married to several men simultaneously. For ease of speech I will use here the term ‘polygyny’ to refer to men’s involvement in concurrent sexual relationships, whether these concern formal marriages or not. Similarly, for lack of a better term, I use the word ‘polyandry’ to denote women’s involvement in concurrent relationships with men, even though these relationships can never be simultaneously classified as marriage. With this, I follow Jane Guyer (1994), who coined the term ‘polyandrous motherhood’ – a term I will discuss further on.

• Polygyny

It seems to be often assumed by social scientists and development practitioners that formal polygyny is an institutionalized, common, and accepted form of marriage in southern Malawi. Traditionally, however, only chiefs were accustomed to marry more than one woman at a time. Today, when Mudzi men formally marry they are instructed by the chief and their ankhoswe not to marry any other woman [P2 2042]. Indeed, men who are involved in multiple relationships can be brought to the chief’s court, although in practice this rarely happens [but see P2 0448; P3 2308]. In the two court cases I heard of in Mudzi, the husband was blamed for the troubles occurring in his marriages or between his wives, as he had done wrong by marrying several women [P2 1208; P3 2308].

Despite this formal discouragement of polygyny, it is generally felt by Mudzi villagers as elsewhere in Malawi that men are promiscuous by nature and easily attracted to other women [e.g. P3 2786, 3674, 3947]. Similar to many other places worldwide, a man’s masculinity is partly measured by his dominance over women and the number of sexual partners he ‘conquers’ (Chirwa & Chizimbi 2009: 33, 35; Field 2009: 34; Kaler 2003). Male promiscuity is excused by the belief that men die if they cannot release sperm when aroused (Van den Borne 2005a: 308).

As mentioned, especially when a wife has just given birth and is traditionally proscribed from sex for several months, many men tend to look for a new partner, whether as permanent substitute or temporary supplement [P2 0144, 0160, 1605, 1638, 1883, 1940; P3 0505, 0698, 0780, 0871, 1729]. In the next chapter on sex and HIV I elaborate further on local justifications for multiple and concurrent relationships.

In the literature on gender and AIDS, men tend to be perceived as the authoritative partner in heterosexual relationships (Arnfred 2007: 145, Kaler 2004a: 286), and

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their wives in their house [P2 1561; P3 2206]). The women who during our fieldwork period were caught having sex with another man than their husband, did so in their own house, at nights when their husbands were away (but came back earlier than expected).


thus as the main culprit when it comes to high-risk sexual behaviour (Higgins et al. 2010). In response, some authors have pointed out that men are victims of cultural gender expectations as much as women, which may push them to prove their worthiness as a man through fearless risk taking and sexual bravery (Kaler 2003, Scalway 2001, Shefer et al. 2005) [see P3 2134]. The frequent occurrence of men maintaining multiple heterosexual relationships is generally fitted within either one of these readings – that of men as sexual perpetrators or that of men conforming to models of masculinity. Our Mudzi data suggest an additional or alternative interpretation – that of polygyny as a male survival tactic. Because the marriage bond is highly unstable in this matrilineal and matrilocal setting, men can never be assured of sustained access to the female domain of house and homegrown crops. As mentioned, it is only after a long and fruitful marriage that a man can become reasonably protected against divorce and consequent eviction. Without that, it is through maintaining ties with multiple women that a man can diminish the risk of one day finding himself without a roof to sleep under and field to be fed from (see also Arnfred 2007). If one woman ends the relationship, a polygynous man can simply move to the house of another partner. By maintaining relationships with several women, furthermore, a man reduces the risk of sleeping with hunger. If the maize stores of one partner dry up, he may still find food at another partner’s house [P3 3854, 3895]. Such multiple ties need not all be formal marital relationships. They may even not be sexual relationships – although they generally either were, or potentially could be in the future [e.g. P2 1007, 1225, 1531, 1594, 1724, 1847, 1864; P3 0568]. I call such (not-yet, not-anymore, or only sporadically sexual) liaisons ‘semi-relationships’ and return to this later on.

Overall, as discussed, women dislike sharing their husband with other partners, but his polygyny – whether in the form of actual marriages or casual sex encounters – is not necessarily a reason for divorce. In general a woman only considers ending a polygynous relationship when the resources that she can access through her partner become too diluted. Hence, in practice a man can only maintain concurrent sexual liaisons if he has enough resources to keep all partners satisfied enough to avert divorce. Notably, in some cases women see advantages to sharing a husband, as in the case of the elderly man whose ill health severely deteriorated over the months of our fieldwork until he eventually died. Despite his weakness he managed to weekly move between the houses of his four wives, who were relieved not having to care for him every day and night [P2 0098; P3 0593, 0766].

• ‘Polyandry’
Colonial records hold that the Yao traditionally believed that a woman could cause death or injury to her husband if she slept with another man while her spouse was on a dangerous mission, such as a hunting, raiding, or long-distance trading trip (Alpers 1975: 18–9). Interestingly, this is demonstrated by the fact that a woman
was hailed for her apparent abstinence if her husband returned home safely. Rather than taking a woman’s monogamy for granted, or extorting it by force, ‘polyandry’ thus seems to have been recognized as possible, maybe even as reasonable, although social mechanisms existed to restrain it.

Of the women who during our fieldwork period were caught having sex with a secret lover, only the ones who were married to another man received punishment from the Group Village Headwoman. These women were to pay her a chicken for their offence [P3 2306, 2663]. The other woman, who was caught in action with the husband of a fellow Mudzi woman, was not fined, because, the Group Village Headwoman explained: “as an unmarried woman it was her right to accept a man’s proposal” [P2 1940]. Although not formally reprimanded, this last woman did face severe harassment from the other Mudzi women after being caught [P2 1940]. Of the two husbands who caught their wife cheating on them, one just angrily grabbed his stuff and left [P2 1408], while the other grabbed a machete and slashed his wife’s head – leaving her unable to carry water for weeks [P2 0320; P3 0584, 3988]. The man then returned to his home village, where he allegedly moved in with one of his former girlfriends [P3 0861].

I do not know what drove these two particular woman (and the others who allegedly did so before) to endanger their marriage by sleeping with another man. One of them (aged 21) had been married for three years without becoming pregnant, which may explain her choice. Both spouses had no other children from other partners yet, and their failure to conceive was commented upon and joked about. Whatever the case, in the months after this woman was caught and left by her husband, her belly finally grew. Even though she now had no husband while expecting a baby, she was more cheerful than before – which surprised me at the time. As I became more perceptive about the interpretation that good or real womanhood derives from motherhood and not wifehood, an interpretation so essentially different from the Western view with which I grew up, her changed state of mind became understandable to me. Romantic attraction may have played a role too in these and other instances, as it did in the case of the woman who confided to us that she had a lover whom she really liked besides her husband who sent regular remittances from South Africa.

Studies based on the MLSFH data found that in rural Malawi female promiscuity is considered justified if a man does not satisfy his wife sexually or financially (Tawfik & Watkins 2007: 1091, Watkins 2004: 682). I already quoted one Mudzi woman who justified her extramarital relationship by exclaiming that she could not be expected to abstain from sex during the long absence of her migrant husband [P2 1539, 1600]. According to her, other Mudzi women with husbands far away turn to lovers for sexual satisfaction too [P2 1600]. Notably, even though it is physical affection that these specific women look for rather financial support, they too receive money or gifts from their extramarital boyfriends [P2 1600, 1602; P3 2247], like
all women involved in sexual relationships. This confirms the arguments that male gifting is an inherent feature of all sexual relationships, and that material support is not only given, longed for, or demanded when a woman is in dire need.

As mentioned, maintaining multiple relationships is complicated for married women who have a husband in and around their house. Unsurprisingly then, most of the Mudzi women who maintained multiple relationships were not married, which, for some, was a deliberate strategy [P2 0914, 1007; P3 2707]. It is common knowledge that men tend to give more during the chibwenzi stage of a relationship than they do once married. Several informants compared chibwenzi relationships with a political campaign, in which men try to charm and win over their prospective partner, particularly by gifting freely [P2 0914; P3 3898]. By not accepting marriage (but only chibwenzi) proposals these young women created the opportunity for themselves to continue their involvement in various sexual relationships. Notably, these women were quite exceptional, both in (pretty, voluptuous) looks and (sociable, outgoing) personalities. This may have caused the many proposals they received from men (although one of the women confided to Gertrude that it was probably a result of the traditional medicine she applied for this specific purpose [P3 2859]). The steady supply of ‘campaigning’ men made them relatively secure in terms of sustained access to resources, which made it unattractive to marry and depend on only one source of support, and which made it worth putting up with other women’s scorn. If cleverly manoeuvred, informal concurrent partnerships can indeed be highly beneficial to a woman:

After two failed marriages Livia (21) was living with her parents again, together with her two young daughters. She longed for some independence from her mother, who she felt was too meddlesome. A number of potential marriage partners had crossed her path, but so far none had actually settled for her or been considered suitable by her. Instead of waiting for that one steady partner who would build her a house, Livia began to assemble inputs from her various past and current sexual partners. One of her ex-husbands, the father of her second child, was prepared to make bricks for her. A boyfriend was willing to buy her a bag of cement. Another one gave her some money to hire a builder. In this way, Livia managed to bit by bit construct a small, one-roomed, grass-thatched house that she could proudly call her own. [P2 0275, 0337, 1890; P3 2302]

Notably, one of the men who offered support to Livia was an ex-husband. The couple had married soon after Livia found herself pregnant, and the young man even paid the chief to formalize their union. Before their baby was born, however, he left Livia to return to his previous wife in another village [P2 0371]. Without rancour Livia explains that the young man had tried but simply did not manage to take care of two households [P3 0504]. Occasionally the couple still meets: she contacts him by (borrowed) phone or letter to ask for assistance [P2 0924; P3 0507], when he sent a message that his wife was hospitalized she looked him up [P2 1041], and once he even took her to a restaurant when they ran into each other at the trading centre [P2 1007]. Or he visits, making such promises as burning bricks for
her new house, and seducing her to have sex with him in her maize field [P2 0186, 0328; P3 0609, 0878]. Next, I further elaborate upon such lingering semi-relationships that seem to be common but tend to remain unnoticed when researchers look only for active sexual relationships.

• Semi-relationships
As appears from the example of Livia, sexual relationships do not always have a clear-cut and definite end. Often a semi-relationship continues to exist, in which a man and woman perform marital duties for each other on an irregular basis, whenever one of them sees fit. Although during our formal interviews women never mentioned their ex-partners as sources of support, many received money, soap, or food from men they had divorced [P2 0328, 0371, 0762, 1135, 1139, 1225, 1264, 1531, 1594, 1612, 1811, 1832, 1847, 1864; P3 0507, 0847, 1043, 2083, 3821; P8 0061]. These men fathered at least one of their children, and as such had an on-going responsibility that could be appealed to [P2 0924, 1103; P3 2297]. Women went to beg support (sometimes returning empty-handed), sent the child to beg for support, or were visited by their ex-partner who brought some money or gifts. Interestingly, the mothers (and in one case the father [P3 1723]) of ex-partners also at times brought food and other gifts for their grandchildren, or were (successfully) approached by the child’s mother for support [P8 0067, 0069]. Material benefits found through men are thus not necessarily restricted to the duration of a relationship. At best the support provided by men – and their relatives – lasts even beyond courtship and marriage.

Jane Guyer (1994), based on fieldwork among the (patrilineal) Yoruba in Nigeria, has developed the fruitful concept of ‘polyandrous motherhood’. She defines it as a liaison of women “cultivating co-parental ties with more than one father of their children” (Guyer 1994: 230), elaborating that “although a woman cannot have concurrent husbands she can have concurrent recognized fathers to her children. … In terms of resource access and daily needs for herself and her children a woman may be managing several men at once” (Guyer 1994: 250). Since marriage bonds are unstable and generally temporal, Guyer argues, it is only through childbearing that a man and a woman can create more lasting ties.

Scholars of patriarchal societies tend to argue that such polyandrous motherhood (whether or not they actually use this term) is a subversive act by some women to diminish male authority over their household and life, and so enhance their autonomy (Haram 2004, Helle-Valle 1999, Meekers & Calvès 1997: 363). While this may be the case, polyandrous motherhood not only occurs in situations of male domination. To a great extent, the concept also suits our Mudzi data, as many women have children from various fathers and benefit from the resultant multiplicity of support sources that this offers them. A woman with children from only one man has a stronger argument to demand support from him specifically [e.g. P2 0724, 1405, 1435], but the risk that this one man fails (or dies) is larger than the
possibility that several men will all fail at the time of need. The acknowledgement that temporary sexual liaisons may result in life-long sources of potential support is highly relevant for the transactional sex debate. It adds to our understanding of women’s generally quick and easy acceptance of relationship proposals as well as unprotected intercourse.42

However, for the case of Mudzi, the term of polyandrous motherhood has a somewhat too strong connotation of intentionality. The great majority of Mudzi women seems to prefer marriage over casual partnerships, and hopes that each child’s father will turn out to be a sustainable match with her [e.g. P3 0457, 0703, 3817]. Here, polyandrous motherhood is not a strategic livelihood choice, as, for example, Liv Haram (2004) found it to be for Meru women in urban Tanzania. Notably, as pointed out by Haram (2004: 224) too, a sequence of reproductively successful relationships may turn out negatively and reduce Mudzi woman’s livelihood security rather than increase it. As a matter of fact, several of the Mudzi women whom I classified as worst off seem to have ended up in this group because of their bad luck with sexual partners, who each left them with another child to care for but without the necessary support to do so. Rather than resulting from an intentional, preconceived plan of action, Mudzi women’s involvement in concurrent relationships seems the unintended result of their ‘judicious opportunism’.43 Trying to make the best of each opportunity that arises may lead to the unplanned situation in which several relationship ‘projects’ are managed more-or-less simultaneously (although the woman concerned may not consider them simultaneous, as she alternately prioritizes the one relationship that seems the best bet at any particular moment).

On its own, furthermore, the concept of polyandrous motherhood does not allow for a recognition of the fact that men, at least in Mudzi, also benefit from maintaining ties with various women, whether those ties are actively sexual or not. It increases, as mentioned, the reliability of a man’s – otherwise always uncertain or restricted – access to shelter, nsima, and sexually available women. When there is something to be fled from, say quarrels with his wife, or something to be gained with another partner, a man may decide to capitalize on his sexual network of potential relationships and (temporarily) shift between them:

When Salika (39) was pregnant of her sixth child, the child’s father – who did not father her other children – left her to marry another woman. From that moment on, Salika considered herself, and was by others in Mudzi considered, to be divorced. Although the marriage is by Salika and others recognized to have ended [banja latha], in fact the sexual relationship continues on an on-and-off basis. Especially when Salika has just received money from her brother working in South Africa, the man tends to show up with a token of support, be it dried fish or half a chitenje. Under the pretence of “coming to see his child,” he moves in and takes

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42 The details of sexual intercourse are the topic of Chapter 6.
43 See Van der Sijpt 2010 for an eloquent elaboration of women’s judicious opportunism in such cases
up where he left off. Each time, however, the man disappeared within a few weeks, once more leaving Salika ‘unmarried’ [osakwatira]. She has now seen enough of his behaviour and says she will not accept him back again. [P2 1629; P3 2319, see also P2 1795; P3 1729, 2404]

For men, it is most feasible and efficient to maintain only loose ties – or, as I call it, semi-relationships – besides one active relationship. A semi-relationship can be left latent until either the opportunity or the need arises to bring it (back) to life. Compared to active relationships, which entail regular contact and input, semi-relationships cost fewer resources, of which men too tend to have little. A co-parental tie may be particularly suited for occasional reinvigoration as the shared child creates a bond that can always be called upon, by either parent, without further explanation. This is not to say that all semi-relationships are by definition between co-parents. They may, for example, also be preludes to potentially new sexual relationships, or simply concern once-active sexual relationships gone astray, as in the case of Jeneti:

A year after she was abandoned by her first husband, Jeneti (37) was visited by an unfamiliar man who proposed banja to her. He straightforwardly explained that he wanted to leave his current wife for being too talkative, and therefore needed a new home to move to. Jeneti warned him that her first husband had left her because five of their six children had died within a few months after birth. The proposer did not mind, and moved in with her soon after. When Jeneti started to fall ill, he began to stay away intermittently, each time reappearing without further ado, simply taking up his role as husband again. Through word of mouth she heard that he was proposing to other women. At the time of our interview, Jeneti had not seen or heard from him for over a year. [P3 3854]

This example shows the pragmatic ‘wife-hopping’ of some men. In this case, however, there is no mutual child that the man can fall back on as the reason for his reappearance and wish to reunite [see also P2 1853, 1882]. As both marriage and divorce tend to be uneventful, an absent man can quite straightforwardly reappear and resume his role as husband, and a woman can quite unproblematically re-accept as her husband the man she, and the community around her, had come to think of as an ex-husband [P3 1729].

The men in the examples above did not maintain concurrent active sexual relationships – which only few men can afford to do. Rather, they, as do many other men, continuously switch between various partners, regularly returning to ex-partners [P2 1845, 2133; P3 1326, 1729, 1927, 2404, 2886, 3854, 3996]. Relationships, whether involving shared parenthood or not, thus can and are often picked up again, (re) activated for as brief or as long as it lasts.

As may be expected from the general vagueness of relationship categories, exactly when an active relationship turns into a semi-relationship, and vice versa, cannot be well defined. In its extreme, a sexual relationship can be confidently considered active if a couple spends all meals and nights together. On the other side of the spectrum are permanently inactive relationships – which, as far as I can see, exist only in the case that one of the partners has died. All other terminated
relationships can potentially be reinvigorated. Even a man who took off with all of his wife’s cotton revenue, or left her fending for their many young children during hunger season alone, cultivating the fields all by herself, may later show up again and try to reunite with his (ex-)wife, though not always with success [P3 0608]. What I envision to be a true semi-relationship, right in the middle of the spectrum, concerns the association between a man and woman that is not considered an actual relationship by themselves or by the wider community, but does entail (irregular) interaction to maintain a tie that either one can fall back on in times of want. Such informal interaction may entail contact through cell phone44 [P2 0867, 0764, 0924, 1041; P3 0507], paying a visit [P2 0178, 0186, 1096, 1504, 1832, 1853, 1882; P3 2568, 2802], men bringing or sending uncalled-for gifts [P2 1435, 1864, 2133; P3 1235], women requesting financial or other material support [P2 0328, 0630, 643, 0924; P3 0507, 3821], men requesting or women offering to wash clothes [P2 1760; P3 1879], men requesting or women offering food [P2 0518, 1446, 1474; P3 1558, 1935] – tokens, thus, of one’s potential performance as a formal partner. Such relationships may occasionally entail sexual intercourse, as this is one of the aspects that represent a formal partnership and can thus be used to confirm and maintain the semi-tie. It is important to recognize the existence of such semi-relationships, wherever located on the spectrum between fully active and definitively inactive partnerships. It reveals that many men and women, in Mudzi at least, are engaged in (potentially extensive and overlapping) networks of latent relationships which become sexual on an on-and-off basis, either to merely confirm the semi-tie or (temporarily) (re)activate a relationship [P2 1546, 1638, 1724, 1882; P3 1735, 2404]. Survey questions on sexual relationships are likely to miss out on such semi-ties as these are not considered and counted as actual relationships by informants.

In conclusion, the term ‘polyandrous motherhood’, however helpful, is too narrow a concept for the case of Mudzi. It is but one component of a larger spectrum of relational practices that I believe is better captured by the concept of ‘semi-relationships’.

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44 Promiscuity is facilitated by the advent of cell phones, one Mudzi woman complained (see also Chirwa & Chizimbi 2009: 46). Because of it, men and women can now contact each other easier and more secretly, even when their spouse is nearby [P2 0130, also P2 1482]. Several Mudzi villagers, men and women, own a cell phone, despite their little access to cash. Almost all wives and mothers of men in South Africa were given a phone by their migrant husband or son. At harvest time, when people have some money to spend, the mobile network providers offer cell phones for a reduced and extremely low rate, at 1500MK (7.50 Euro). Call credits (minutes) are sold in small and affordable units, starting from 50MK (0.25 Euro), and are for sale throughout the rural areas. Calls can also be made without spending credit, by hanging up before the person who is phoned can answer the call, which is termed “flashing”. The one phoned can see the number that tried to reach him or her and choose whether or not to spend credit to call back. Villagers who do not own a phone can borrow one from others. The service of charging a battery (at 30MK – 0.15 Euro) is offered at the nearest marketplace, by an entrepreneurial couple who invested in a second-hand car battery, which they themselves charged at the nearest trading centre.
Another helpful approach to understanding relationship practices has been developed by Swidler & Watkins in their 2007 article on transactional sex in rural Malawi. They interpret occasional sexual unions as on-going patron-client ties of dependence. These are thus perceived of as a form of social insurance in a highly insecure setting, rather than as merely driven by male sexual desire and women’s acute poverty. This tallies to a large extent with what I have described here, as it captures well the long-term insurance character of (on-and-off sexually active) relationships and the mutual dependence between men and women. Contrary to what I found in Mudzi, however, it assumes that relationships are structurally unequal, with men depicted as ‘patrons’ and women as ‘clients’. Men’s involvement in sexual relationships is argued to be motivated by a need for followers to expand their powerbase. This may be the case for a minority of men, say some relatively well-to-do men living in Balaka town (with whom various Mudzi women would surely like to have a sexual patron-client relationship). But in most of Mudzi’s relationships the man’s socio-economic position is not significantly better than his partner’s, and therefore the power balance is more delicate and the interdependence more equal. In the next chapter I further elaborate on Swidler & Watkin’s valid argument that sexual ties function as an important form of social capital.

Deconstructing the discourse of destitution

Earlier I noted that most Mudzi women justify their acceptance of sexual proposals by claiming that they had been in pressing need for support. Data collected through other means than self-reports revealed, however, that this claim did not always hold. In this section I argue that women’s widespread reference to acute destitution resonates with conventional gender expectations, and functions to dignify potentially status-threatening choices.

As described, being an unmarried woman in Mudzi is generally disadvantageous to one’s social status. So too, however, is being involved in sexual relationships with many men (whether simultaneously or serially), which may lead to accusations of immorality and uhule – prostitution [P2 1424, 1796; P3 2340, 2560, 2939–42]. Several married women said they preferred staying with their unsatisfactory husband in order to avoid the risk of ending up divorcing and remarrying multiple times, thus losing their community’s respect and support [P3 2340, 2987, 3264–5, 3831, 3923]. During our stay in Mudzi we saw various examples of the potential reprisals against perceived sexual misconduct from women, such as the following [see also P3 0758]:

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45 See also African feminist Oyeronke Oyewumi (2002: 6), who argues that in many African cultures the idiom of marriage is a way of describing patron-clients relationships.

Livia (21) experienced the negative consequences of her promiscuous image when the two men who each planned to marry her were discouraged to do so by other Mudzi women saying that Livia was a *hule* who likes men too much. [P2 1645, 1756, 1796, 1882; P3 2495]

When Pamela (27) was caught having sex with a married man, other Mudzi women wildly screamed that her thatched hut should be burnt down, mentioning in particular that this was not the first time for Pamela to be caught red-handed in adulterous sex [P2 1940]. For some time after the incident, the relatives living near Pamela did not speak to her and called her a prostitute [P3 2560]. Pamela’s brother who worked in South Africa declared that he would no longer send her support because of this shameful behaviour. [P3 2331, 2650]

In their search for livelihood security, women must thus carefully navigate between the support that can be accessed via a sexual relationship with a man or several men, versus the sources of support that may become blocked when getting involved with that man or those men. In principle, relationships enhance a woman’s social status, because (to-be-)married women are respected by the community. Yet each relationship also entails the risk of eventually degrading a woman’s social status, as it may leave her without a partner again and with an extra stain on her reputation. Joyce (24, two children) verbalized her concern about this:

Joyce divorced her first husband because they quarrelled a lot. After eight months she received another relationship proposal, which she accepted “to be respected by other people.” But this man is also not behaving as she feels a loving husband should, which worries her because it may indicate that he will leave her soon. Then she will have to find a third husband while she is still young, which, according to her, does not reflect well on her social image. [P3 3923, see also P3 2793, 2939–42, 3264–5]

Due to the highly unstable nature of sexual relationships in Mudzi, women regularly find themselves without a partner.Preferring, for the reasons described, to get involved in a new relationship, they risk damaging their social status. The following fragment from my field notes exemplifies again how involvement with men can be detrimental to a woman’s entitlement to support – but, notably, also how this damage can be diverted:

We heard an ambulance not far away. Soon Jasmine [57] came by, telling us that a three-year-old grandchild of Alma [66] had died at Balaka hospital (coughing, fever, vomiting). Jasmine blamed the child’s mother, because she had been going around with men. Indeed Alma herself had complained about this too, telling the girl that she had already lost her sister to this behaviour, should learn from it, see now you lost your child because of it… When Hamra [58] passed by, she disapproved of Alma having said this, arguing that “everybody knows the girl is an orphan, she had nobody to take care of her, she had to move around [meet with men] to find support.” [P3 2063]

Just like Hamra defended the deceased child’s mother, many women defended their own sexual behaviour by pointing to their need for support [P2 1580, 1653, 1901; P3 1132, 1462, 1572, 1730, 2560].

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47 The ambulance of Balaka hospital was mainly used to bring home the corpses of patients who had died at the hospital.
When Pamela (27) and Emra (25) were caught having sex with the husband of another village woman, both justified their deed by declaring that they had needed help in taking care of their child(ren). [P2 1901]

One of the women knitting behind our house asked Jane [17] why she has so many boyfriends. Jane replied that when she still lived with her aunt (who took her in after her mother died), she did not have any boyfriends because this woman bought her soap and body lotion. However, when she recently moved to her grandparents in Mudzi it was made clear she had to find her own soap and lotion as they cannot manage to buy it for her. And to obtain money for this, Jane explained, she needs boyfriends. [P2 1580] Her father, who lives with a new wife in another village and is sometimes visited by Jane, had complained about Jane’s improper behaviour of engaging with boys. She riposted by enquiring whether he would then supply her with all that she needed. Her father has since remained silent on the topic. [P3 1572]

It appears from these statements that a woman’s need for support is generally considered a valid – even the most valid – argument to justify her involvement in sexual relationships (see also Chirwa & Chizimbi 2009: 52, Helle-Valle 1999: 378–9, Van den Borne 2005a: 121). Conversely, when such need for support was lacking, criticisms of women’s involvement in sexual relationships were especially harsh [P2 1581; P3 1236, 1917, 2202, 3536–7] – indirectly confirming the perceived validity of the poverty argument:

Shortly after her husband’s death, rumours abounded about the Group Village Headwoman being in a relationship with a married man from a neighbouring village. Her relatives fiercely complained about it, saying: “She has sons in South Africa who send her money. Why does she need to do this?” [P3 2255] … “I think she accepted the relationship because she wants money from him, you know that man has a lot of livestock. Her husband who died left a lot of money, her children from South Africa send a lot of money, but she still wants a husband. She has her own grandchildren who can make a toilet, a fence.” [P2 1661] “… it is a shameful story.” [P2 1767] “… she is setting a bad example.” [P2 1787]

In summary, a woman’s social status and consequential access to community support are at risk when her involvement in sexual relationships is considered to go against proper female behaviour. To avoid the potentially negative impact that sexual choices may have on their social status, women can, and do, tactically emphasize another aspect of proper female identity, namely the reliance on male support. In their study on fish-fo -sex trade in Zambia, Merten & Haller (2007: 70) write of “a context of plural norms,” which allows women to redefine as traditional and thus legitimate their sexual practices that may otherwise be disapproved of. Although these authors’ exact topic, analysis, and conclusion differ somewhat from mine, this concept of co-existing divergent norms that can be employed and readjusted according to need corresponds with my argument here. Comparably, Helle-Valle (1999: 389), in his analysis of the various prevalent attitudes towards transactional relationships in Botswana, speaks of a “diverse ethical landscape.”

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48 As will be further elaborated upon in Chapter 6, Mudzi villagers, as many other Malawians, believe that a child gets ill when its mother has sex with another man than its father.
This diverse ethical landscape contains a blend of historical and modern-day sexual mores, none of which are dominant, that are combined in different ways by different actors to construct their perspective. The cultural construction in Mudzi that men and women have specific, separate roles within the household, and that women are entitled to the support that men are designated to provide only when enrolled in a relationship can be conveniently used by women to safeguard themselves (or others) against suspicions of indecency. Rather than reflecting actual levels of poverty and dependence, women’s widely applied discourse of destitution thus serves, to some extent at least, to defuse the potentially harmful relationship choices that external circumstances encourage them to make.

Discussion and conclusion

The data presented in this chapter indicate that material motives are an important aspect of women’s considerations concerning their relationships with men. Interpreting this from a Western perspective, however, easily leads to a misunderstanding of the issues at stake. In most Western settings, the only legitimate reasons for involvement in sexual interactions have come to be romantic love and strong physical attraction to a particular individual (Helle-Valle 1999: 387). Meanwhile, engagement in sex for material gain is typically equated with prostitution and morally taboo (Bloch 1989: 166–7, De Zalduondo & Bernard 1995: 158, Helle-Valle 1999: 387). Within this framework, a woman claiming that economic grounds underlie her sexual choices must either be willfully wayward or unwillingly pressed by dreadful external circumstances. Advocates of the transactional sex paradigm empathetically opt for the last.

The fact that Mudzi women so commonly mention their need for support as the basis for engagement in sexual liaisons indicates, at the very least, that they – contrary to advocates of the transactional sex paradigm – do not consider material reward in relationships as something immoral or shameful. Rather, it seems to suggest that material benefit is considered a highly valid, perhaps even the most appropriate, reason for sexual involvement with men – which is confirmed by other Mudzi data presented in this chapter.

Our data furthermore indicate that the common discourse that destitution drives Mudzi women to accept relationship proposals does not always tally with daily life practice. Women also engage in relationships because it is simply customary to be wed; in order to be a respected community member; to avert suspicion of husband-snatching or prostitution; to accomplish tasks that only males, and particularly husbands, are supposed to carry out; and for physical and emotional affection.

An interesting divergence thus appears between discourse – that which was expressed in the interviews to me and often towards each other as well – and practice. Obviously, such a divergence is not unique to Mudzi. In order for any human
to communicate something, or even think about something, it must be ‘caught in an idiom’. What is expressed, therefore, is necessarily a stylized portrayal of reality. The particular ways in which such portrayals are styled, nonetheless, tend to reflect a society’s normative templates. I argue, building on the data described in this chapter, that in Mudzi one important template entails the conceptualization of sexual or marital relationships as essential to survival and, related to this, as essentially utilitarian.

This template may well be a result of the long-term prioritization, widespread throughout Africa, of the lineage bond over conjugal bonds. The harsh ecological, economic, and political circumstances that rural Malawians face and have faced for decennia may have facilitated its reproduction. As argued, Mudzi women become socialized to value what Hunter (2010) calls ‘provider love’ more prominently than ‘romantic love’. Having internalized a value system in which sexual relationships are primarily considered practical vehicles for individual and household development (and in broader perspective for lineage reproduction), women’s relationship choices are likely to indeed be motivated to some extent by material considerations. A society’s normative templates can thus directly impact actual behaviour. But, as just noted, they do not determine behaviour. The fact that women so frequently claim that their sexual behaviour is economically driven probably also results from the social desirability of this assertion. Subconsciously, this may be what women distil from the varied considerations that are at play in their relationship choices. Templates thus also influence how personal behaviour is self-reflected upon, perceived of, and framed. In other cases, women’s emphasis on the poverty argument as reason for their engagement in a (series of) sexual liaison(s) seemed a tactical choice, probably to avert negative alternative readings by fellow villagers. Besides directly impacting actual behaviour and influencing how personal behaviour is reflected upon, normative templates may thus also be consciously applied to make socially acceptable those behaviours that are otherwise potentially harmful.

In conclusion, deducing from women’s self-reports that they are so marginalized, economically and socially, that their survival depends on assistance, which men are only willing to provide in exchange for sex, conceals more than it reveals. Most importantly, it conceals the role played by cultural conventions, the strong symbolic value of men’s material care, and the level of agency that women display as they navigate to optimize access to male support while safeguarding their social status.
Safe or unsafe – that’s the question:
Sex and HIV

Introduction
The overall question that this book aims to answer is whether economic empowerment of poor women will lead them to make safer sexual choices. This question follows from the increasingly widespread assumption among development professionals that it is poor African women’s dependence on male economic support that keeps them from practicing or demanding abstinence, faithfulness, or condom use, thus putting them at high risk of HIV infection. Whereas the previous chapter dealt with women’s choices concerning the partnerships in which sex takes place, the current chapter zooms in specifically on the choices that Mudzi women make concerning sexual intercourse itself. This chapter explores one component of the overall research question, namely the aspect of safe(r) sexual choices – more precisely, the local conceptualizations of ‘safe’ and ‘unsafe’ sex. In brief, I argue that Mudzi women’s perceptions of what constitutes beneficial or harmful sexual practices diverge from what is branded as ‘safe’ and ‘unsafe’ sex in formal public health messages.

Among social scientists, policy makers, and development practitioners alike the concepts of safe and unsafe sex generally relate to the timing of sexual debut, the consistency of correct condom use, and the number and types of sexual partners (GoM 2010b: 37–9, UNAIDS 2011: 25). Safe and unsafe sex are thus narrowly defined as relating to specific health outcomes, particularly unwanted (e.g. teenage) pregnancies and sexually transmitted infections (STIs). In the daily life experiences of Mudzi women, however, sex is perceived to be much more than a potential source of unwanted pregnancies and STIs. In this chapter I elaborate upon the additional meanings – both positive and negative – that Mudzi villagers attach to sexual activity. Multiple short- and long-term pros and cons are (consciously
and subconsciously) weighed by Mudzi women to make choices concerning their sexual practices. As will be described in this chapter, HIV infection is but one consideration amidst many others. To understand the comparative weight given to the risk of a fatal HIV infection, this chapter will first assess the considerations and negotiations of Mudzi women concerning sexual practice in general, and subsequently those related specifically to HIV and AIDS.

In order to sufficiently grasp the attitudes of contemporary Mudzi villagers towards sex, it is relevant to explore how sexuality has been conceptualized and valued throughout Bantu history. The contemporary understandings of this conceptualization permeate daily life dealings with gender in general and sex in specific. Before turning to my findings from Mudzi, I therefore begin by describing the traditional construction of sexuality as a central aspect of Bantu cosmology. Following, I assess how this ideology of sex shapes (but also is shaped by) the daily life practices of today’s Mudzi villagers. After reviewing the multiple interpretations, valuations, and practices of sex in daily Mudzi life, I turn to HIV and AIDS as relatively new considerations when it comes to engaging in sexual activity. Assessing whether and at what cost HIV is preferably prevented, it appears that while some attempts are made to reduce transmission probabilities, HIV prevention is generally given low priority. The reasons for this low prioritization are assessed in the last section of this chapter.

Notably, by discussing how women weigh the pros and cons of sex I do not mean to insinuate that Mudzi women actually make conscious calculations each time they consider having sex. In this chapter, I try to dissect the various interrelated, overlapping, and at times opposing factors at play in creating and reproducing habitual – in this case sexual – behaviour. Human behaviour is rarely consistent: there are no mathematical rules to be found in which such-and-such choice within such-and-such situation will always lead to such-and-such decision. Mudzi villagers, like people everywhere, have multiple, often divergent, and at times contradictory motivations, which they combine in different ways at different occasions without much thought. A similar argument was made in the previous chapter on women’s tactical use of prevalent gender norms to navigate their daily lives. The intersection of an age-old deferential attitude towards sex with the new biomedical fatality of it, as described in this chapter, offers another interesting case to assess how diverging discourses can coexist and be tactically employed in varying ways within different contexts.

Sex

Sexual ideology in Bantu history
Throughout history, Bantu groups have been preoccupied with safeguarding fertility as this was considered the first requisite for clan survival (Saidi 2010, Wembah-
Rashid 1995: 52). In an attempt to ensure sufficient, healthy, and strong offspring, numerous sexual regulations were put in place, presumably by the ancestral spirits on behalf of the Supreme Being (Van Breugel 2001: 172). Community harmony and continuity were believed to depend on observing the sexual norms and taboos as this appeased the ancestor spirits and assured human reproduction (Bryceson et al. 2004: 20, Lwanda 2004: 30). Thoroughly educating both boys and girls on these sexual regulations was therefore perceived of utmost importance.

Sexual education for youngsters took place primarily during a pre-adolescent initiation ceremony. The terminology used for the female rite de passage is comparable among many of the Bantu-descendant ethnic groups throughout Central Africa, indicating that this practice must date back from before the Bantu’s initial dispersion from the Congo basin several thousands of years ago (Saidi 2010: 101). As the continuation of a matrilineal clan depends particularly on women’s fertility and hence sexuality, more emphasis was placed on girls’ sexual instruction. As a result, the initiation ceremonies for girls were more elaborate than those for boys, and have persevered longer and among wider populations than boys’ rites de passages (Morris 2000: 113, Saidi 2010: 121). The prevalence of female initiation rites has in general been associated with a valued social status for women, as such rites indicate that importance is attached to a solid preparation for girls’ role-to-be (Brown 1963: 849). The various initiation rites during women’s lives in Malawi have been argued to function to strengthen the matrilineal bond between women, who make great fun of men and their sexual drives during the rites, so positioning them as outsiders (Bennesch 2011: 92, Morris 2000: 95).

Over time many Bantu-speaking groups in Malawi and beyond have, under various patriarchal influences, evolved into patrilineal, virilocal societies. However, as established in earlier chapters, the Yao of southern Malawi have remained largely matrilineally and matrilocally organized. Until this day, initiation ceremonies are performed for both boys and girls. The perseverance of this cultural practice among the Yao may to some extent be related to their adoption of Islam from Arabic trading partners towards the end of the nineteenth century. Within this version of Islam it was common practice to ceremonially initiate boys, which allowed the pre-adolescents’ initiation rites of the Yao to be easily incorporated into the new religious lifestyle, under changed Islamic names but with largely unaltered content (Lwanda 2004: 31, Msiska 1995: 70, Sicard 2000: 296). Lwanda (2004: 31) argues, furthermore, that maintaining cultural practices became a significant means to resist colonialism. The Yao in particular welcomed the colonial

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1 It is particularly on historical (ethnographic, linguistic, and archaeological) data on these female initiation rites that Christine Saidi (2010) bases her claim that all Bantu-speaking people share a matrilineal history (see also Amadiume 1997 and Diop 1989 [1963] for such claims about the entire African continent).
regime which had deprived them of their main source of wealth and power by abolishing slavery, whereas other ethnic groups appreciated the protection found at Christian missions against the Yao slave raids (see Chapter 2). Bantu-descendants who converted to Christianity are today less likely than their Islamic counterparts to perform pubertal initiation ceremonies\(^2\) (Munthali & Zulu 2007: 154–5), which were considered heretical by missionaries and therefore strongly discouraged (Bennesch 2011: 40, Richards 1969 [1940]: 27).

Yao girls, as the boys, are communally initiated at an early pre-puberty age, usually before the age of ten (Mair 1951a: 60, Morris 2000: 92, Msiska 1995: 70–1).\(^3\) The female initiates were and are held in seclusion with their fellow girl initiates for a certain period of time (some claim it could last up to years in the far past, and today is usually only between two and four weeks: MHCR 2005: 37, Wembah-Rashid 1995: 49), and instructed about the proper ways to behave as an adult women.\(^4\) The girls are told to be generous, kind, and hardworking (Morris 2000: 96). They are taught how to observe personal hygiene, how to dress and sit properly (MHRC 2005: 36, Munthali & Zulu 2007: 159–60). Furthermore, they are instructed to always respect and obey the elders of the community as well as their future husbands (Mair 1951a: 62, Morris 2000: 96, Msiska 1995: 71–2, Munthali & Zulu 2007: 160, Richards 1969 [1940]: 67).

The central theme of the initiation ceremonies is, however, the act of sex. Uninitiated youth are strongly forbidden to engage in sex, as a pre-initiation pregnancy was considered among the worst of threats to ancestral protection of the community (Morris 2000: 96, Richards 1982 [1956]: 33–4, Wembah-Rashid 1995: 49). During initiation, girls are explicitly and elaborately told and shown, through songs and dances, how to perform coitus so that mutual pleasure and timely offspring can be ensured.\(^5\) Sex, it is stressed to both male and female initiates, is vital for good personal health, a solid marriage, community harmony, and clan reproduction (Morris 2000: 70, Poewe 1981: 66–7). In other words, sexual activity was conceptualized as each woman’s duty towards herself, her husband, and most importantly her community (Chirwa & Chizimbi 2009: 19, Wembah-Rashid 1995: 48).\(^6\) As essential as female procreation was for the community, as important,  

\(^2\) Munthali & Zulu (2007: 154–5) found a strong link between religion and the likeliness of having been initiated. Among Muslims (all of them Yao) 80 percent of boys and girls had been initiated, while among the studied Christian groups 22 to 28 percent of boys and 32 to 40 percent of girls had undergone initiation.

\(^3\) When later these girls start to menstruate, they go through another, less elaborate, individual ceremony (Davison 1997: 46, MHRC 2005: 38-9, Morris 2000: 92).


by extension, it became for an individual. Only after giving birth were women considered full members of society, and permitted to establish their own household, thresh their own grain, partake in initiation and pottery rituals, and eventually be granted a position of power (Saidi 2010: 164). During their initiation, girls were (and still are) instructed to never deny sex to their husband unless they are menstruating (MHRC 2005: 38), just delivered a child, miscarried, or induced an abortion7 (Richards 1969 [1940]: 88, Van den Borne 2005a: 51). At the conclusion of these *rites de passage*, the newly initiated were encouraged to put into (sexual) practice what they had learned so as not to forget8 (Forster 2001: 251–2, MHRC 2005: 37, Munthali et al. 2006: 51, Rimal et al. 2004: 30–1) [see also P3 1154].

In an early overview of ethnographic data on Bantu marriages, Torday (1929: 257) notes that most of the studied groups neither expected nor valued a bride’s virginity at marriage (see also Mitchell 1962: 38 for Yao specifically). Smith & Dale (1920: 38) quote a Bantu informant who, when probed for a local translation of the word ‘virgin’, jokingly answers that a woman who never had sex would be in his language called ‘a fool’ (in Saidi 2010: 148). Writing about Bantu descendants in Zambia, Richards (1969 [1940]: 15) accounts that women who reject men are criticized for having ‘arrogance of the womb’. As matrilineal and thus female procreation is so highly valued, women’s sexuality seems to have been stimulated rather than restricted (Horne 2001: 307, Saidi 2010: 151).

This is not to say, however, that sexual activity in general was unrestricted, which Caldwell et al. (1989) suggest in their much cited (and critiqued) theory of a distinct and internally coherent African system of sexuality (discussed in Chapter 1). The Bantu considered sexual intercourse to be not only a biological undertaking, but also a spiritual one through which mystical powers were released.9 This made it necessary sometimes to refrain from sex while at other times to engage in it in strictly prescribed ways.10 During the process of pottery and iron making, for example, all involved had to abstain from sex (Saidi 2010: 133, 137), as must close

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6 It may be in this light that Niehaus (2007: 852) has argued that for both men and women in rural South Africa “celibacy and singleness were deemed to be more dishonourable than promiscuity.”
7 Writing about the Bemba, a group of matrilineal Bantu descendants in Zambia, Audrey Richards (1969 [1940]: 15) asserts that married couples were expected to have intercourse every night except during these taboo periods, and normally more than once a night.
8 To what extent this still occurs is unclear (e.g. Chirwa and Chizimbi 2009: 15–6). Lwanda (2004: 32) argues that this practice is likely to be kept hidden by rural practitioners as it has been widely condemned by health professionals and urban elites for potentially spreading HIV (for examples of this condemnation see GoM 2010b: 39, Liwewe et al. 2009, MHRC 2005).
10 This is related to the belief that sexual activity creates a ‘hotness’ that is harmful to those who are sexually inactive, or ‘cold,’ e.g. young and old people. I will not go into this hot-cold dichotomy that underlies many sexual rules as I believe it is not necessary for the main point I seek to make. For an analysis that goes beyond the usual description of this explanatory model, see Drews 1991 (in Dutch).
relatives and counsellors of youngsters during their initiation rites (Mair 1951a: 60), parents during their child’s illness (Van Breugel 2001: 203), and the relatives of a deceased person until the prescribed mourning period ends (MHRC 2005: 61). Such ritual abstinence was assumed to help avert misfortunes as small as cracking pots or as big as lethal epidemics. Extramarital sex, furthermore, was considered a taboo at any time, and thus also subject to supernatural punishment from the ancestral spirits (Saidi 2010: 150, Van Breugel 2001: 170, 199–200) [P8 0033–5]. When committed by either spouse during pregnancy, the punishment would entail protracted childbirth and possibly the baby’s and/or mother’s death (Mair 1953: 98, MHRC 2005: 48, Torday 1929: 283, Wembah-Rashid 1995: 54). When committed during other periods, a mystical, potentially lethal illness would be inflicted on those near to the perpetrator, generally his or her spouse or children (Peters et al. 2007: 48, Van Breugel 2001: 169). These ailments, called *mdulo*, *tsempho*, *ndaka*, and *kanyera* – of which the symptoms11 to a great extent resemble those of AIDS – are also risked by a man who transgresses the taboo of having intercourse with a woman who is menstruating, recently gave birth, miscarried, or had an abortion (Forster 2001: 253–4, Kondowe & Mulera 1999: 5, Lwanda 2004: 30, Peters et al. 2007: 48–55, Van Breugel 2001: 192).

While sex was curbed during certain precarious, often transitory, situations (Van den Borne 2005a: 51), it was required at other times – to protect, heal, or cleanse (one of) the sexual partners or someone close to them. For example, one act of ritual intercourse was considered mandatory between new parents soon after childbirth to strengthen their baby and protect it from harm12 (Drews 1991: 90–1, MHRC 2005: 84–5, Richards 1982 [1956]: 30, Saidi 2010: 148, Zulu 2001: 475–6). A new widow or widower too had to have ritual sex, with a specifically designated partner (a relative of the deceased or someone hired to do the job) to cleanse off death (Mair 1953: 97–8, MHRC 2005: 64, Richards 1982 [1956]: 34, Saidi 2010: 152). A chief and his wife needed to perform ritual intercourse in the bushes where they planned to found a new village (Saidi 2010: 148). Traditional healers, furthermore, may prescribe their clients to have (sometimes incestuous) intercourse to accomplish their wishes, which may range from curing infertility to becoming rich (Kondowe & Mulera 1999: iv) [P2 0013, 0662; P3 0506]. Sexual intercourse has thus been attributed with strong – positive and negative – potencies, which must be carefully channelled by observing the regulations laid down by the ancestors, to avert illness and other misfortunes, preserve social stability, and, most essentially, assure community survival.

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11 These symptoms include thin hair, weight loss, diarrhoea, ‘miasmic’ appearance (Kondowe & Mulera 1999: 5), feverishness, and sicknessiness [P8 0033, 0039].

12 If the father was no longer available, the child’s mother could also have ritual intercourse with any other man (MHRC 2005: 54), in some cases a man especially hired to provide this service (Van Breugel 2001: 184).
To what extent these sexual norms and taboos have ever been scrupulously observed cannot be ascertained. What is handed down from one generation to the next, especially when done through ritual ceremonies, often entails ideology rather than actual practice. One example of how reconstructions of history are often reflections of ideals rather than realities was already discussed in the previous chapter: the claim by many Mudzi elders that marriages were more stable in the past than today, which is unsubstantiated by other data (see also Kaler 2001). It seems that these elders’ memories are coloured by prevailing ideas about proper marital conduct and a moral condemnation of contemporary youths’ failure to conform to these. What is today presented as tradition, as “the ways of our ancestors”, may never have been actual practice. What is communicated during the initiation ceremonies as constituting proper behaviour is just that: a contemporary interpretation of how things used to be and therefore should be. Furthermore, ‘traditional’ messages about ideal behaviour not only inform actual practice (to some extent at least), but are also shaped by it. An example of this, described above, is the fact that Islamic elements, including new Arabic names, were added to initiation rites when Yao chiefs strategically adopted the religion of their thriving trading partners. Another example touched upon earlier is the fact that many ethnic groups have shifted or are shifting from matrilineal to patrilineal ‘traditions’, as a result of slave marriages, contact with patrilineal Zulu descendants from Southern Africa, and with Western, patriarchal missionaries, colonial administrators, and post-colonial development professionals. Traditions are thus not static remnants from one pre-historic day of origin – they evolve over time, are reinterpreted and adapted, abandoned, and (re)created.

Various observers of Malawi have noted a discrepancy between the ideological sexual norms and taboos presented as traditions, and actual practice – generally interpreting this as a weakening of adherence (Bennesch 2011: 18, 72, 83, Bryceson et al. 2004: 20, Drews 1991: 94, Van Breugel 2001: 177, Van den Borne 2005a: 54). It has been suggested that this weakening is related to a waning of the moral authority that was formerly vested in the elders of a community (Undie & Benaya 2008: 134). These community elders were responsible for ensuring that the cultural customs of their ancestors (as perceived by these elders) were honoured and preserved. Ever since young men gained access to paid employment, however, the power balance is said to have increasingly shifted from the elders to the male youth (Lindsay & Meischer 2003 for Africa in general, Mandala 1982: 35 for Malawi). Their contact with other secular and religious worldviews through labour migration, education, urbanization, and modern mass media have likely contributed to a crumbling – though not a vanishing – of the felt need to behave as presumably prescribed by the ancestral spirits. The Zambian Bantu descendants studied by Drews (1991: 94) noted that taboo-violating behaviour is no longer punished as consistently as it used to be in the past – which may well be related, as both cause
and consequence, to a slackening in the observance of traditional rules. Chirwa & Chizimbi (2009: 61) found the same to be said throughout Malawi. In Mudzi, several elderly blamed external development agencies and post-Banda presidents that introduced and promote concepts like ‘freedom’, ‘democracy’, and ‘human rights’ for a progressing disregard from younger generations for the advice of their elders, and so their communities’ traditional guiding principles\(^\text{13}\) [P3 0435, 0953, 2543, 2586, 4027]. According to them, contemporary boys and girls argue that “this is our time” and “we have rights” to emphasize and justify their sexual freedom.

It is not my intention to resolve whether or to what extent observance of sexual traditions has weakened. I have presented a reconstruction of the Yao ancestors’ norms and taboos concerned with sexuality so as to assess what is impressed upon contemporary men and women as ‘the way it should be’ – irrespective of whether this is representative of the way it actually was in the past. This reconstruction should therefore be taken as an impression of the various issues at play, particularly the strong cultural emphasis on female fertility.

Sexual practice in Mudzi village

In rural areas like Mudzi (contemporary versions of) traditional practices are still discernible. Boys are circumcised\(^\text{14}\) and undergo a one-month initiation program while girls are secluded for two weeks to be initiated into adolescence and adulthood [P3 0214, 1669]. Another custom traceable to early Bantu history (Saidi 2010: 101) and still performed in Mudzi is the ceremony held during a woman’s first pregnancy to prepare her for delivery [P2 1846; P3 1880]. The traditionally prescribed abstinence\(^\text{15}\) after childbirth and during menstruation too continues to be observed [P2 0144; P3 1951, 1967], as is the taboo on adding salt to food when menstruating [P3 1880].

Other norms and taboos seem to be taken less seriously. Despite clear instructions, during initiation ceremonies and beyond, to always respect and obey elders, many Mudzi youngsters fling to the winds the advice and requests of their (grand) parents [P3 0771, 0953, 2263, 2543]. Another restriction that is not (and may never have been) strictly observed is marital fidelity, as we have seen in Chapter 5. Although

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\(^{13}\) Bennesch (2011: 72–83) and Chirwa & Chizimbi (2009: 79) have also noted this discourse throughout Malawi. Both suggest that it may have rather been the disappearance of Kamuzu Banda’s intensive and brutal disciplinary regime (keeping a close watch on people’s behaviour; scaring them from going out at night; and forbidding, among many other things, women from wearing trousers or skirts above the knee, and men from having long hair or earrings) that triggered ‘loose’ behaviours rather than the introduction of these Western concepts per se.

\(^{14}\) Before the introduction of Islam, Yao boys were partially circumcised. When the initiation rites were Islamized, it became customary to remove the whole foreskin instead of only the outermost skin of the penis (Msiska 1995: 73).

\(^{15}\) As noted earlier, there is no fixed rule about the length of post-partum abstinence in southern Malawi, but on average it is practiced for six and one-half months (GoM 2011a: 84, Zulu 2001: 475–6).
a child’s illness is often (sometimes semi-jokingly) interpreted as a sign of its parents’ promiscuity [P2 1498; P3 1817, 2560; P8 0023, 0035–7] – indicating that the belief in a mystical link between infidelity and disease continues to prevail – numerous Mudzi men and women engage in concurrent (semi-)relationships [P2 1084, 1300, 1345, 1408, 1567, 1636, 1645, 1656, 1695, 1893, 2187; P3 1037, 1186]. A recent study on risk perception during pregnancy among Malawian Yao also suggests that ancestral sanctions against extramarital sex continue to be feared. One major concern was found to be the supernatural harm that can be caused through the infidelity of either partner (Launiala & Honkasalo 2010: 405). But, as further discussed below, and as also found by an in-depth study of multiple and concurrent partnerships throughout Malawi, a number of extenuating circumstances can be called upon by both men and women to justify their involvement in such relationships (Chirwa & Chizimbi 2009). Van Breugel (2001: 200, 208) furthermore writes that Malawians increasingly attempt to circumvent potential punishment from the ancestral spirits for sexual ‘misbehaviour’ through the use of protective medicine. Whether this solution to ancestral restrictions truly is new may be disputed, but in Mudzi such herbal measures were indeed discussed and presumably used – for example by women who wanted to avert their child’s illness after having slept with another man than the child’s father [P3 1208, 1967; P8 0024, 0037].

Concurrent (semi-)partnerships occurred so frequently in Mudzi that Gertrude considered it key in explaining the high number of weak and ill children [P8 0023, 0036]. The high incidence of concurrent partnerships despite traditional restrictions against it is likely to relate, whether as cause or consequence, to exculpations that have been constructed for both male and female promiscuity (see also Chirwa & Chizimbi 2009, Maganja et al. 2007, Wamoyi et al. 2010). As established in the previous chapter, women’s involvement in multiple relationships can locally be excused on economic grounds. The pretext constructed for male promiscuity is rather of a biological nature, as Malawian men and women alike presume that men are promiscuous by nature¹⁶ (Bennesch 2011: 146, Smith & Watkins 2005: 654) and may even die if unable to release their sperm when sexually aroused (Van den Borne 2005a: 308). This is difficult to reconcile with the prescribed months-long abstinence after childbirth, hence justifying many fathers to seek temporary or permanent new sexual affairs. The innate sex drive that is attributed to men, like the need for economic support that is ascribed to women, help to explain the fact that despite strong ancestral discouragement, multi-partner relationships can take place on a large scale. The fact that older generations (including those who turned into ancestor spirits) also involved

themselves in such sexual ‘misbehaviour’ has been used as justification too [P2 1692] (see also Chirwa & Chizimbi 2009: 32–3, Van Breugel 2001: 260–1). Some other studies have suggested that the Islamic approval of polygyny is at times referred to by Malawian men and women to justify (only) men’s involvement in multiple sexual relationships (Chirwa & Chizimbi 2009: 19,31; MHRC 2005: 20). We have however not heard reference to such religious justification during the many conversations we had with and overheard between Mudzi women.

The fact that males are assumed to be driven by an innate desire for sex does not mean that women are denied feelings of sexual lust. In line with the traditional emphasis on sexual enjoyment for both partners, several comments from Mudzi women show that female sexual desire is explicitly acknowledged. When mentioning reasons for entering into sexual relationships in general, numerous women mentioned lust [chilakolako], or the veiled term ‘human nature’ [chilengedwe], along with the more pragmatic motives discussed in Chapter 5 [P3 0802, 2277, 2798, 3322–3, 3440–1, 3597–8, 3665]. Although rare, on a few occasions women hinted more openly at their own feelings of sexual desire [see also P3 0790]:

Makuta (32) is financially sufficiently provided for by her husband who migrated to find work in South Africa. When she came to borrow Gertrude’s bicycle to visit her boyfriend in a neighbouring village, she explained about her extramarital relationship: “Imagine, four years of not sleeping with my husband! I cannot manage to stay without sex for so long.” She had complained to her husband about this over the phone, and he had joked back that he would cut off his penis and send it to her. [P2 1539, 1600]

Another Mudzi woman told Gertrude that she could not sleep because of “some feeling in her body”, and that she, lacking a man to satisfy her desire, considered taking a maize cob to help herself. [P2 0158]

Other research in rural Balaka found that women’s extramarital relationships are, among other things, motivated and justified by sexual dissatisfaction with their husbands (Tawfik & Watkins 2007, also Chirwa & Chizimbi 2009). Saidi (2010: 151), in her book on women’s social position in early East-Central Africa, argues that throughout Bantu history women have been “raised to be free agents in their sexual lives.” This is confirmed by statistics that indicate that in Balaka district only 1 percent of men and women feel that a husband would be justified to beat his wife if she refuses to have sex with him (GoM 2011a: 393–4). My data show, however, that whereas some of the miyambo [traditions, cultural values] promote women’s sexual agency, others work to curtail it:

Several young women, at least some of whom had enjoyed sex during the courting stage of their relationship, complained after marriage to us and other women about the unrelenting sex drive of their husbands. Eventually, several of these women decided to divorce because of it, as did Jane (15): “I have run away from my husband [in Balaka town] because he was just sleeping with me often. I hadn’t realized that marriage is different from chibwenzi. Then you see each other sometimes, and then not for some days. But now, this boy wants sex all the time! Sometimes up to five times a day! I can’t manage.” [P2 0414, 1586; P3 0757, 1462, 1569]
The fact that these women chose to divorce so as to elude unpleasant sex demonstrates their perceived right to a satisfying sex life, and their ability to act upon it. This confirms Saidi’s (2010) claim about women’s high degree of sexual autonomy. It also demonstrates, however, the limits to this autonomy. The women felt unable to reduce the frequency of their sexual encounters to better meet their own desires through any other means than complete dissolution of the relationship. They were reluctant to negotiate about their partner’s sexual behaviour, possibly because they had been socialized not to disobey or deny sex to their husband.

Hence, while raised to be active sexual agents and encouraged to make sex enjoyable for themselves, women are restricted in their agency by the other norm: to not obstruct their husband and his sexual desire (see also Bennesch 2011: 83, MHCR 2005: 38). The question that remains is whether this has always been the case, or resulted from the relatively recent strengthening of (young) men’s social position due to their access to financial capital and other earlier described patriarchal forces.

For women, giving in to male sexual lust seems, besides a cultural obligation and personal pleasure, also to be considered an important instrument for harnessing male support. It is a major aspect of women’s obligations within the marital gender contract, and the performance of it in theory obliges men to live up to their side of the contract. According to some Mudzi women chatting at the pump one afternoon, the many children born in their area are a result of the fact that women believe they can only hold on to a partner by giving him the pleasure of sex often [P2 1402]. Other comments indicate that overall, women have no doubt that withholding sex from a man will directly push him into the arms of another woman [P2 1620; P3 1324, 1563, 2251].

Besides satisfying male (and female) lust, women often consider sex necessary to solidify a relationship as it provides their new partner with a child of his own – which is particularly desirable when either partner already has children from a previous partnership [P2 1534; P3 1268, 1290].

Not long after the youngest of their two children was born did Chikondi (28) decide to divorce her husband – who was a generally fine man but who would beat her severely when drunk. As a divorcee she faced the increasingly offensive suspicion from her fellow village women, who feared that Chikondi would now be hunting for their husbands. Therefore, when a stranger proposed marriage to her one day when walking to the market, Chikondi allowed the man to move into her house that very same evening. Her new husband objected to only feeding the children of another man, and insisted that Chikondi would soon bear him a child too. Chikondi therefore refrained from using birth control measures and indeed found herself pregnant without much delay. Nine months later she gave birth to twins, and six months after that her husband decided to move back to his previous wife. “Men these days are a problem,” Chikondi sighed. “During the first days they say that they love you, that they will take care of you, and stay with you until you die. Then they start saying that they want to have a child. Then you get pregnant, working in the field with a big belly, afterwards running home to cook for him. But soon after, they leave you. Then the next one comes, and the same happens…” [P3 0871, 3817]
Through purposefully conceiving a child with her new husband, Chikondi weaved him into her patchwork household. By doing so she hoped, as she did before and expects to do again, to increase her chances of keeping the new man attached to her household. This attachment, as described in the previous chapters, may last even after the sexual relationship formally ends (see also Guyer 1994, Luke 2003: 74, 77). Conceiving a man’s child creates a bond, with the father himself but also with his relatives, that can be called upon as long as the child must be provided for. It thus forms one of those much-wanted potential sources of support to fall back on in times of need – although, as described in Chapter 4, these potentially supportive bonds do not always materialize [e.g. P2 0924; P3 3821, 3897].

Not only men value offspring, however. As described earlier, procreation is also vitally important for women, whose (self-)identity largely depends on their status as mother. Besides conforming to the cultural ideal of motherhood, and turning a sex partner into a potential provider, conceiving leads to children who will hopefully take care of their mother once grown up. Mudzi women who were encouraged to give up a child, for example to have it taken care of by its father or to kill it as sacrifice to become rich, explicitly argued that they did not want to do so because the child is their future source of support [P3 0784, 1899, 3949, see also P3 2491, 3823]. “He may go to South Africa,” one woman dreamed out loud about her baby boy, “and send me blankets” [P3 1899]. Unsurprisingly, considering the emphasis on procreation and encouragement of sex during initiation rites, over one-third of the Mudzi women who can recall the year in which their first child was born (N71) became mothers before turning 18, and some were as young as 14. Most unsolicited comments from Mudzi women about sex revolved around its reproductive qualities. Generally, sex is directly associated with becoming pregnant [P2 0123, 1527, 1540, 1638, 1832, 1866; P3 1370, 1735]. When sex does not lead to pregnancy, herbal medicines and folk healers are sought to bring about conception [P2 1702; P3 0502, 2895]. When these measures remain ineffective, women may (secretly) turn to another man (who is either paid for this service or not) in an attempt to conceive. If a couple that fails to produce live offspring does not divorce by itself, they are pressured by their parents or community elders to pursue new, hopefully more fruitful matches [P3 3854, 4012].

While pregnancy is desirable in many cases, in several others it is not. The small minority of young women who are serious about finishing school, for example, do not want their ambitions shattered by having to stay home caring for a baby [P2

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17 Local witchdoctors (are believed to) advise clients who request to become rich to kill their child, or have incestuous sex [e.g. P2 1212, 2166-7; P3 0506] in order to accomplish their wish.

18 This number is based on self-reports. The real number is likely to be higher, as we know of at least two women who during the formal interview omitted to mention a child they conceived years before their first marriage [P3 1046, 1099].
Young women who prefer the generally more profitable chibwenzi relationship over a marital union would rather not have this lifestyle jeopardized by a baby either [P2 0914, 1845; P3 1249, see also P2 1811, 1940; P3 0860, 2249, 3001–2 about the unlikeliness of men being attracted to women who bore many children]. Conceiving a new baby while still nursing another is culturally disapproved off (Forster 2001: 253, Wembah-Rashid 1995: 55–6), so having a young child is generally felt to be a reason for not wanting a new pregnancy yet [P2 1515, 1736, 1756; P3 1248, 1951, 2059]. Mudzi women with older children, furthermore, regularly expressed their unwillingness to have to care for even more – especially after having been abandoned earlier by several men after conceiving [e.g. P2 1403, 1498, 1534, 1772; P3 1735, 3978–80]. Elderly women may feel ashamed to become pregnant [e.g. P3 0871].

As sex is for Mudzi women so inextricably bound up with conception, this potential consequence is an important consideration when deciding whether or not to become involved with men. Desperately wanting to avoid pregnancy leads some women to temporarily refrain from any sexual relationship – particularly girls who hope to secure a future livelihood through education, and women who are fed up with men leaving them with ever more mouths to feed. Abstinence, however, is not the only, nor the most desirable, means to reduce reproduction risks. Mudzi women who are unwilling or feel unable to completely abstain from sex, yet prefer not to conceive, can use either traditional and modern folk medicine or biomedical contraception.19 Those who find themselves with an unwanted pregnancy can undergo clinical abortion (fairly costly at 3000MK) or can (and at a large scale do) turn to herbal folk healers or self-medication with poisonous substances available at the local shops, such as washing powder [P2 0485, 0643, 0902, 0914, 1500, 1515, 1544, 1702, 1756, 1845].

In sum, more than with anything else, sex is in Mudzi intrinsically associated with reproduction – which is in line with the age-old emphasis on sex as vital for community survival. Fertility, procreation, motherhood, and children are in general highly valued, and important reasons for women to engage in sexual relationships with men. Nonetheless, there are also numerous circumstances under which individual women may prefer to avert conception or terminate a pregnancy.

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19 The most commonly used (traditional folk) method consists of a string tied around the waist with a knot for each year that one wishes not to conceive [P2 349; P3 0871]. Because of its visibility this measure can, however, only be used when a woman’s sexual partner approves of her birth-controlling intentions [P3 0871]. The same goes, albeit to a lesser extent, for biomedical contraceptive pills as these have to be kept somewhere in the house and be taken in each day, which may be difficult to conceal. The pills can be obtained for free at any of the three health clinics frequented by Mudzi villagers, but I know of no one in Mudzi who used them [P3 0593]. The head nurse of one of these clinics confirmed the general low use of birth control pills, and explained this as resulting from women’s fear to forget a daily dose, and the potential risk of a disagreeing husband finding out [P3 0982]. Mudzi women themselves mentioned
Obviously, then, other reasons to engage in sexual activity play a role too. Similarly, as described in this section on sexual ideology and practices, even though infidelity is traditionally discouraged through threats of ancestral punishments, in day-to-day practice both men and women regularly engage in concurrent sexual relationships. Conformity to the traditional ideals of procreation and faithfulness is thus recurrently compromised by other needs and desires. Our data, as presented in this section and the previous chapter, suggest that women’s other motives to engage in sex besides reproduction include satisfying lust, conforming to the (new?) cultural ideal of female subordination to male sexual desire, and wishing to cultivate a partnership with a man for both social and economic reasons.

Whereas pregnancy as a consequence of sex is considered negative in some situations but positive in many others, the risk of contracting a disease as a result of sexual contact is considered negative at all times. In the next section this consideration of risking a sexual transmittable infection, particularly HIV, when having sex is further elaborated upon.

HIV and AIDS

When mentioning fear of infection as reason for refraining from sexual intercourse with a particular man or at a particular occasion, Mudzi women use the term ‘matenda’ [P3 0505, 0742, 1558, 1599, 2941, 2943-4, 3147, 3475], which is the general word for ‘diseases’ [singular nthenda]. Gertrude, as well as other researchers of ChiChewa-speaking people, however, usually translated this word as specifically meaning ‘AIDS’. Further comments from informants indicate that they indeed often, though not necessarily always, referred particularly to matenda a Edzi (literally ‘the diseases of AIDS’) [P2 0741; P3 1491, 1501, 1572, 2134, 2943-4, 3147, 3868, 3919]. In the past it had been other sexually transmitted infections like gonorrhoea and syphilis that were feared for their potential fatality [P3 3861, 3547] (Lwanda 2004: 33). However, since the introduction of Western medicines these are now easily curable – and thus less frightening – diseases (Watkins 2004: 679). Consequently,
HIV is at present the main sexually transmitted virus to be feared. In this second half of the chapter I therefore focus in particular on the extent to and ways in which Mudzi women take into account the risk of HIV infection when considering having sex.

To this end I first establish that Mudzi women (and men) prefer not becoming infected with HIV for a number of reasons (which differ somewhat from the generally assumed reasons). Following, I assess the ways in which HIV transmission is (and is not) avoided, finding that despite a general hope to not become infected, prevention is often not actually a priority. In the last section I assess explanations for this low prioritization of HIV prevention in the daily lives of Mudzi women.

**Fear of infection**

It may seem obvious but should not be taken for granted that a research population, or a group of individuals within it, necessarily feels the need to avoid HIV infection. In this light, the study results of Launiala & Honkasalo (2010) are noteworthy. Assuming that malaria would be perceived as a major risk during pregnancy, as it is life threatening to both an expecting mother and her unborn child, they intended to study how rural Malawians manage this risk. To their surprise they found that this risk was not taken seriously and consequently few measures were taken against it. In Mudzi, women expressed an explicit preference for not contracting HIV.

One woman said she dreaded being diagnosed with HIV because she feared that she would then spend all her time “just waiting for death” \[P2 1655\]. Several other women worried that their children would be left uncared for if they were to die \[P3 2943–4, 3147\]. Most concerns about HIV infection, however, related to the stigma that continues to surround it:

\[P3 1573, 1598, 1625, 2770\], when scrutinizing someone’s unkempt appearance \[P3 2770\] or sexual behaviour \[P2 0741, 1404, 1542, 2187; P3 0435, 2709, 2867, 3868–9\], when discussing someone else’s or one’s own sickness \[P2 1271, 1524, 1719, 1871; P3 1419, 1730\], or the death of relative \[P2 1287; P3 1280, 1326, 3868\], suggests that the topic is not necessarily hushed up (anymore) (see also Watkins 2004). I have no decisive answer to why the word matenda is generally used to refer to the potential sickening effects of sex (see also Van den Borne 2005a: 54–61 about multiple local readings), but I can make some speculations which seem reasonable within the context of our findings. Firstly, matenda may not necessarily refer to AIDS alone, but have been used also before AIDS entered the scene, and refer more generally to the fact that one can get a disease through sexual intercourse – as seems to have been the belief for many centuries. In the last century STIs were especially rampant, after having been introduced by colonial Europeans (Lwanda 2004). Furthermore, AIDS in itself is not a disease, but a syndrome that inhibits the body from fighting against infections and thus causes it to increasingly fall ill. Rather than having a distinctive ‘face’, AIDS expresses itself through a myriad of illnesses. Hence, the phrasing that someone suffers from ‘diseases’ is actually quite accurate for AIDS. Alternatively, or additionally, the word may simply be an abbreviation of the full expression matenda a Edzi [disease of AIDS], which is at times used too \[P2 1548; P3 1419, 3919\]. As educational messages about HIV and AIDS invade daily life in Mudzi on such a scale that they have become inescapable and omnipresent, AIDS needs only to be referred to as “the disease”, and anyone will understand what is meant. Use of the word matenda may, however, also be a remnant from earlier times when AIDS was surrounded with greater shame than it is now – by which I do not mean to imply that this shame has entirely disappeared.
“I am afraid to go for blood testing. If I will go and am found positive, definitely everybody in the village will talk about me”, one woman (24) said [P2 2080, see also P3 1523]. Another woman, Evelin (29), justified her reluctance to get tested by referring to a fellow village woman whose positive sero-status had recently become a public secret, and who for some time thereafter had been ignored by everyone other than her close relatives. Women had stopped talking when she approached the water pump, gossiped behind her back, and refused to share food and utensils with her [P2 0359; P3 1598, 2584]. Facing such hardship Evelin considered it impossible to live ‘positively’, which, following campaigns that encourage such an attitude, she understood to be a requirement when infected with HIV [P3 1523, 2583–4].

Besides instigating loneliness at a time of emotional distress, the exclusion that results from the AIDS stigma bears severe material risks. An HIV-positive woman (34) from one of Mudzi’s neighbouring villages, told me how her fellow villagers had successfully argued to the chief that she should not receive a coupon for subsidized fertilizer “as she would soon die anyway” and therefore would not benefit from increasing yields [P8 0091]. Until recently at least, little reciprocity could be expected from someone headed for the debilitating, lingering death caused by AIDS. He or she would be in increasing need for support rather than be able to give any, making it unappealing for others to invest in the maintenance of a good relationship. The same has been found by Nambo & Niehof (2008: 241) in rural Tanzania, who summarize:

Different from the idealized view that social capital helps households maintain their livelihoods and strengthens their resilience to future shocks and stress, many of the HIV/AIDS-affected households were found unable to cope with HIV/AIDS impacts, because social capital itself is not resilient in a context of high HIV/AIDS prevalence and widespread poverty.

In this light, even arousing suspicion of a positive HIV status can be detrimental for one’s potential access to support, and is thus anxiously avoided.

Comparing data from rural and urban Zambia, Virginia Bond (2006) found that AIDS stigma is most severe where resources are insufficient to help all in need. The intensive care that AIDS patients need, often for a long period of time, makes them an almost unbearable burden for (potential) caretakers who are already limited in money, food, and time. According to Bond, these (potential) care providers tend to frame the painful decisions they must make about the allocation of resources in a language of attribution and blame (2006: 192).

As described, promiscuity and infidelity have throughout Bantu history been classified as sexual taboos. Breaching these taboos was believed to provoke supernatural sanctions, many of which were health and life threatening. For over a century, Christian and Islamic leaders have preached against sexual ‘perversity’ too. Therefore, when public health campaigns introduced HIV and AIDS as resulting

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21 In the next chapter I elaborate upon this important concept, defining it as ‘the ability of individuals and collective actors to mobilize resources through their social network’.
from ‘dangerous’ sexual practices, including infidelity and promiscuity, this must have been fairly easy to grasp for Mudzi villagers and others throughout Central Africa (Watkins 2004: 679). Comments from Mudzi men and women indicate that HIV infection is indeed strongly associated with promiscuous sexual behaviour [P2 0144, 0309, 0741, 1272, 1404, 1524, 1542, 1811, 2187; P3 0602, 1326, 1791, 2527, 2665].

Eveles (88): “One of my daughters died because of AIDS. All her children died before they reached their first year; that is how my daughter realized that she was infected. She had a husband who moved around a lot, sleeping with many women. It was he who infected her.” [P3 1326]

Jasmine (57): “Have you seen Suset? She is just getting thinner and thinner. She used to have a lot of boyfriends, that why she is not looking healthy.” [P2 1271, 1524]. … “Livia likes men too much. She will die of AIDS just like her sister” [P2 1542].

Ada (18) was left by her husband just after bearing her first child. He had simply disappeared one day without a word. Her anger about his deceit was still fresh and bitter. “I think that he did not come back home because we were not able to sleep together [have sex] as our child is still young. He has now moved in with another woman, but soon she will also be pregnant and give birth to a child, and then he will leave her too and move to another wife. Later on he will have many wives, and die before he reaches 30 years!” she smiled grimly. [P2 0144]

Sofia (25): “I met my ex-husband on the way back from Balaka, and he gave me a cabbage. But he does not look good, very thin. He likes women too much. … He travels a lot, so maybe he is having girlfriends everywhere” [P3 2527]. Jasmine, the man’s mother, on another occasion listed that at that moment her son had a pregnant wife, a pregnant girlfriend, and two ex-wives with two and four children respectively, of whom Sofia is one. Worried, his mother added: “He is just getting married everywhere without fearing matenda.” [P2 2187]

It appears that HIV prevention messages fit in well with a local, age-old, and over-time-reconfirmed adage against sexual licentiousness. This adage, however, happens to be one that is widely accepted as a command that, despite its veracity, cannot always be lived up to. In other words, the new threat of AIDS has been merged into the realm of an existing and still-upheld norm against sexual transgression that is (accepted to be) at odds with lived experience. Notably, the norm itself is not challenged: it continues to be subscribed to by virtually all, just like the need to protect oneself against HIV infection is widely subscribed to. Yet in practice, below the surface of genuine agreement, failure to comply is considered normal.

In line with this, Isak Niehaus (2007) has argued that it seems unlikely that AIDS stigma is related to the apparent transgression of sexual normative behaviour, as is usually assumed. He argues that if this were the case, then the other sorts of inflictions caused by such behaviour should generate the same degree of discrimination, which they do not. Instead, he suggests that it is the horrendous physical decay and deadly end caused by AIDS, and the resultant status of HIV-infected persons as ‘dead while living’ that trigger fear and stigmatization. My findings, like those of Bond (2006) and Nombo & Niehof (2008), suggest that it may indeed be the terminal nature of AIDS that explains the differential attitudes towards this and other STIs. However, rather than stigma stemming from a fear of
the zombie-like look of patients, it may be their prospective inability to provide future support and the drain they pose on caretakers’ resources. Furthermore, it seems too farfetched to completely dismiss the thesis that an association of HIV and AIDS with sexual immorality causes stigma, because the discourse on this association is widely practiced at village level.

This analysis suggests that a double standard prevails in Mudzi. On the one hand, sexual transgression is widespread and clandestinely justifiable on many grounds. On the other hand, however, when the threat arises that a community member may become a severe burden due to AIDS-inflicted diseases, accounts of sexual culpability (and with this ‘stigma’) quickly surface. Possibly, as argued by Bond (2006), this sexual culpability discourse serves, whether consciously or subconsciously, to cover up and cope with one’s inability to offer the communal solidarity that is traditionally prescribed.

It appears that Mudzi villagers have good reason to dread HIV infection – because of its inherent death sentence, but even more so because of the (emotional and material) exclusion that it triggers. Suspicion of being HIV-positive is therefore preferably avoided – which, notably, is not the same as avoidance of infection itself.

**Efforts to prevent**

- Formal public health efforts
The knowledge that public health experts deem necessary for individual avoidance of HIV is widely at hand in Mudzi, as it is found to be elsewhere in Malawi and many other parts of sub-Saharan Africa (see Chapter 2). Until recently, formal HIV-prevention efforts in sub-Saharan Africa focused almost exclusively on informing the public about the existence of a new fatal virus, and ways to protect themselves against infection (Barden-O’Fallon et al. 2004: 131, Hardee et al. 2008, Kalipeni et al. 2007: 1015–6, Nguyen & Stovel 2004). Policymakers seemed to assume that, first, lack of knowledge about HIV and AIDS was the main contributor to the continued spreading of the virus, and, secondly, that people automatically stop having unsafe sex once they understand the risks involved (Barden-O’Fallon et al. 2004: 132, Hardee et al. 2008: 6). As a result of the widespread awareness campaigns, by the end of last century virtually all Malawians had at least heard of AIDS (see Chapter 2). When my Mudzi informants were subjected to an unexpected test on their knowledge of HIV and AIDS – during an event that was announced

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22 I doubted whether to use the word ‘unwillingness’ instead of ‘inability’ here. As noted in this chapter and further elaborated in the next, the few resources (including time) that Mudzi villagers can dispose of are often strategically invested, particularly in relationships that are potentially reciprocal. Villagers could choose to allocate their resources to help community members suffering from AIDS, but tend to choose not to – hence my inclination to use the word ‘unwillingness’. However, as I hope to be making clear, such decisions tend to be instigated by a lack of sufficient resources and a need to survive – hence my final choice of the word ‘inability’.
as a workshop about growing trees – they could all flawlessly recite the awareness and prevention messages that reach them via radio broadcasts; posters decorating the walls of each health facility, restaurant, grocery and liquor store; and external development interventions, like the ‘tree workshop’ [P3 0600, 0602, see also P3 0435, 1280, 3540-1]. Their formulations largely followed the exact wording used in the educational materials, e.g. “HIV ndi kachirombo kamene kayambitse matenda a Edzi” [HIV is a virus23 that causes AIDS].

Despite the fact that knowledge of HIV and AIDS seems to be impressively accurate in Mudzi as it is found to be throughout Malawi (and beyond), the number of new infections per year in the region continues to increase24 (GoM 2010b: 71). Of all pregnant women who attended antenatal services at the health clinic near Mudzi over the past year, 12 percent were found to be HIV positive.25 Among those who came for voluntary counselling and testing (VCT), infection rates were much higher – almost 24 percent of men, and nearly 22 percent of women [P3 0982]. Mudzi women’s life histories attest to these high figures with frequent references to close relatives dying in prime-age, some of their deaths explicitly attributed to AIDS [P2 2187; P3 1280, 1326, 2063, 3868].

As also noted in Chapter 2, the extensive awareness and behaviour-change campaigns have led to high levels of knowledge of HIV and AIDS, but not stopped the virus from spreading. The messages transmitted through these campaigns often stress one or several facets of the so-called ‘ABC’ recommendation, which stands for Abstain, Be faithful, or use a Condom (Barden-O’Fallon et al. 2004: 131, GoM 2010b: 64, Mbugua 2009). Abstinence is, however, difficult to reconcile with the great value that Yao men and women, as many others, traditionally attach to procreation and the act of sex itself. Furthermore, as assessed in the previous chapter, (prime-age) Mudzi women for a number of reasons want to attach a male partner to them and their household, and sex is an essential means to achieve this. For many within and outside Malawi, therefore, abstinence is not a realistic option.

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23 The ChiChewa word kachirombo literally translates as ‘small wild beast’ and is also used to denote insects, germs, parasites, bacilli, and bacteria (Steven Paas ChiChewa/ChiNyanja-English dictionary 2004). One young Mudzi man (23) told us that men are not supposed to fear wild beasts, so neither should they show any fear for the ‘small wild beast’ of HIV [P3 2134]. Reducing the number of sexual partners or using condoms would be considered as exhibiting such fear.

24 In absolute terms, the number of new infections in Malawi is estimated to have been almost 70,500 in 2010, and prospects to be almost 80,500 in 2012 (GoM 2010b: 71). The HIV incidence rate has been and continues to be highest in Malawi’s Southern Region (ibid: 19).

25 HIV testing has become a standardized component of antenatal care in Malawi, and is found to be experienced as mandatory by pregnant women and their partners (Angotti et al. 2010). It has furthermore been found that fear of stigma and discrimination when found HIV-positive keeps large numbers of women from accessing antenatal care, or their husbands from letting them (Chikonde et al. 2009, Turan et al. 2008). It seems probable that especially women (or partners) who have reason to believe they are infected forego antenatal care to avoid being tested. If this is the case, then the HIV prevalence of 12 percent is likely to underrepresent the actual percentage of pregnant women living with the virus.
Fidelity as a preventive strategy is difficult too, as it is only effective when both partners are faithful, and can thus only be applied when partners sufficiently trust each other – which in Mudzi is often not the case [P2 1370, 1405, 1440, 1600, 1605; P3 0806, 1572, 1639, 1776, 1888, 1998, 3860]. As described in Chapter 5, despite many women’s expressed desire to form a team with their husbands (“helping each other to develop our household”), most partnerships are ad hoc, unstable, and short-lived. Rather than forming a team with a shared goal and future, Mudzi couples in general seem to expect and accept that, in the end, each fends for him- or herself. Throughout Malawi studies have pointed out that distrust is a common feature of relationships between men and women, and husbands and wife in particular (Bryceson et al. 2004: 27, Forster 2001: 247, Smith & Watkins 2004: 649). Forster (2001: 247) suggests that this has long been the case, referring to old songs that women sing when pounding maize together, which are highly critical of male laziness, drunkenness, and womanizing habits. The risk of AIDS, he argues, has compounded the mutual distrust. Bryceson et al. (2004: 27) indeed found that women blame men for bringing HIV to the family, more specifically for their drinking habits and their tendency to go after other women when drunk. Men, on the other hand, blame women for coming home with the virus after having been looking for food or money, insinuating they often find it by providing sex. Findings from the MLSFH project confirm a discourse of distrust and blame among rural Malawian women and men. Women are particularly worried about their own husbands infecting them, as men are considered promiscuous by nature. Men, in turn, are most worried about contracting HIV from their extramarital partners (Smith & Watkins 2004: 649). When distrusting one’s partner, fidelity is an illogical and possibly risky strategy to protect oneself against infection.

The last option offered by formal HIV-prevention campaigns is condom use. However, in Mudzi, as found elsewhere in Malawi and sub-Saharan Africa, condoms seem to be rarely used during sex, despite their free availability at the nearest health clinics. On numerous occasions Gertrude or the village women themselves brought up the topic during casual conversations, and each time women were clear about their non-use of condoms, including with extramarital boyfriends [P2 1084, 1585, 1594, 1697, 1736, 1757, 1831; P3 0871, 1263, 1558, 2253]. Whenever they further elaborated upon this, they explained that they do not use a condom during sex because their partner does not like it, or he at least did not bring it up [P2 1585, 1697; P3 1263, 1280]. Responsibility for condom use (and especially non-use) was thus by-and-large placed on men. A common argument heard throughout

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28 Condoms in Mudzi seem to be used mainly by young boys who make footballs out of them [P2 1831; P3 0624, 1371].
Malawi and beyond, and reiterated by Mudzi men too, is that “one does not eat a sweet in its wrapper either” [P3 1263; P8 0081]. Condoms are believed to take away the ‘sweet taste’ of (skin-to-skin) sex, and a woman who suggests using them would therefore be perceived as wanting to deprive her partner of his sexual pleasure. “If you ask about condoms,” Livia (21) explained, “boys say you don’t love them” [P3 1263]. In the literature on condom use in Malawi more elaboration can be found on the general aversion to it. Condoms are so strongly associated with AIDS, promiscuity, and distrust that neither men nor women seem even tentatively willing to use them. For women it seems most stigmatizing to possess condoms or even suggest using one (e.g. Van den Borne 2005a: 135) [see also P3 1294, 1665]. Associated with prostitution and promiscuity, Agnes Chimbiri (2007) writes, condoms are considered appropriate only in risky extramarital relationships, not within marriage. Condom use signals the inferior status given to a sexual relationship: not safe, not serious, not intimate (Chimbiri 2007: 1104, Tavory & Swidler 2009: 181, Van den Borne 2005a: 135–8). The suggestion to use a condom within a steady relationship is considered by both men and women a reason for break-up, as it is either taken as proof that the suggesting partner has been unfaithful, or accuses the other of infidelity. In order to turn casual sexual encounters at least into the form of a relationship, disassociate oneself from disrespectful prostitution, and increase one’s chances for the relationship to last, condom use is not brought up or even rejected. For a woman, as discussed, the wish for pregnancy may not only be at play within but also outside marriage, as it increases her chances for lasting support from the child’s father. Furthermore, the religious objection that condom use would be against God’s will prevails in

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30 Interestingly, a study comparing sexual attitudes among “Whites, Blacks and Indians” in South Africa found that only Indian males felt a strong incentive to forego the pleasure of skin-to-skin sex and use a condom because they are forced to marry a girl in case of pregnancy (Kaufman & Stavrou 2004: 388).

31 One young, educated, urban, Malawian woman that I know well had long protected herself against HIV infection by completely refraining from sexual relationships – although her purpose had been particularly to avoid pregnancy so as to be able to finish her studies. When she allowed herself to have her first boyfriend, already in her twenties by then, she prepared herself well and bought condoms. This was not at all appreciated by her boyfriend, who did not know how to interpret this shocking fact. The young woman had to do a lot of explaining but failed to restore her boyfriend’s trust.

32 In line with this, Schoepf (2001: 344) mentions studies finding that women who self-identify as commercial sex workers more likely than others to use condoms, albeit only with men they consider clients.


34 Trinitapoli (2009), however, found no overall correlation between religious affiliation and sexual behaviour in Malawi (although characteristics of a particular local congregation may impact the sexual behaviour of its members). In general, Muslim authorities in Malawi have been found to be more pragmatic towards ‘human weakness’ and therefore less averse to condom use than Christian religious leaders (Forster 1998: 538).
Malawi as in much of the rest of the world (Kaler 2004b: 106, Chimbiri 2007: 1104). Lastly, Kaler (2004b) points to the often-overlooked ‘long shadow’ of past family planning efforts, which were widely interpreted as hostile attempts of the Malawian government and international organizations to trim down the country’s or continent’s (poor) population. Persistent rumours hold that condoms are part of this conspiracy, possibly purposefully infected with AIDS or at least containing an ill-making oil [see indeed P3 1280].

Besides the ABC behaviour-change recommendations, testing and treatment services are increasingly offered by the government and international organizations as a means to contain the AIDS epidemic. According to the head nurse of the small hospital nearest to Mudzi, most men do not come for testing until they are very ill, at which point it is often too late for treatment (see also Parrott et al. 2011). She added that those few who are voluntarily tested while still feeling healthy are almost exclusively young men [P3 2725]. Women are in principle routinely tested for HIV when attending a health clinic for antenatal care. Those who test positive and do not qualify for anti-retroviral treatment (ART, further discussed in the next session) are offered drugs to reduce the risk of mother-to-child transmission at birth. They are told to return to the clinic at least within 72 hours after delivery so as to receive the same drug for their newborn as well. According to the head nurse of the hospital nearest to Mudzi, however, many of the pregnant women who are tested positive do not return for that follow up: “You will only see them come back after a year or two, when they are pregnant again. Then after having their second child, that is when most of them die” [P3 2725–7]. It must be noted here that a 2009 study found that the drugs needed to prevent mother-to-child HIV transmission were out of stock in over 50 percent of health care centres in Malawi (GoM 2010b: 63). The study did not speculate whether this may be a cause or consequence of pregnant women’s overall low adoption of the prevention strategy.

The fact that they had been tested at pregnancy, for some of my informants, served as a justification to not undergo another HIV test [P3 0765]. Other women argued that they were not married at the moment and would go for a test when finding a proper husband – disregarding the fact that they were involved in non-formalized yet sexually active (semi-)relationships [P2 1697; P3 0752, 0765]. Not only unmarried women themselves left unacknowledged their (informal) sexual activity in the face of HIV risk. Even the health officer running the Voluntary Counselling and Testing (VCT) centre35 nearest to Mudzi did so, at least when

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35 This is a different facility from the hospital referred to in the previous paragraph. The former is a tiny child and maternal health care facility where VCT services are offered, while the latter is a small hospital attending to all health problems (although referring many of the slightly more complicated cases to the larger hospital in Balaka town).
Gertrude, Livia (21), and I had ourselves tested there [P3 0807–22]. Right after I had told the counsellor that I was married, he asked me if I wanted to have any condoms. Gertrude and Livia told him they were unmarried, and did not receive an offer of free condoms. The counsellor’s differential response may suggest that only my involvement in sex could be openly and legitimately recognized, and thus built upon. Livia was meanwhile denied a chance to access free condoms to protect herself against HIV transmission from one of her many (potentially infected) casual lovers. Possibly, the man acted out of respect, because offering condoms to an unmarried woman would have meant insinuating that she might be involved in clandestine relationships. Or maybe he followed donor instructions not to offer condoms to unmarried youngsters as this might encourage illicit sexual activity (see also Ahlberg 1994: 234). Whatever the case, trying to match safe-sex promotion with the norm that (women’s) sexual activity only takes place within a formalized relationship seems very contra-effective, especially considering the fact that condoms are locally considered inappropriate within the marital context.

Despite a general reluctance to get tested, some men and women, like Livia, do muster courage to go for voluntary counselling and testing. For some women, as we will see below, testing (and thus accessing treatment when necessary) serves as a means to lower their risk of dying from AIDS as a result of their profitable sexual relationship with a unfaithful partner. However, these and other Mudzi women who, amongst each other or to Gertrude, said they would soon go for a test, usually kept postponing it. On a day-to-day basis other matters took precedence over the potentially life-saving but at the same time status-threatening trip to the testing centre.

• Locally developed efforts

It appears, as found by other researchers in the region, that the HIV-prevention measures insisted upon by external development agencies are largely incompatible with the daily life realities of Mudzi women. Measuring behaviour change in line with the conventional ABC recommendations gives the impression that these women do little to protect themselves and others against HIV infection. This should, however, not be interpreted as complete paralysis or denial, as is sometimes assumed (e.g. Bryceson et al. 2004: 29). As Schatz (2005), Watkins

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36 When I told Gertrude that I wanted to have myself tested, she decided on her own to be tested too. I did not request this from her, or even suggest it to her.

37 I have not been able to figure out what exactly motivated Livia to join us when we went to be tested. Possibly, she had wanted to know her status, and had disliked both options of going alone or going with someone from within her close network. Maybe our example made it easier for her to actually go too. Maybe she just liked the prospect of spending some time alone with us, as walking to and from the clinic took over two hours. Maybe a combination of these factors triggered her (quite unusual) decision.

38 At a national level it is estimated that in 2009 4.5 percent of Malawian men and women aged 15–49 underwent an HIV test (GoM 2010b: 19).
(2004), and others39 found elsewhere in rural Malawi, Mudzi men and women have developed strategies to reduce their risk of contracting HIV that are more feasible and contextually appropriate than the strict ABC instructions. These strategies reveal, however, that avoiding HIV transmission is often outweighed by other considerations:

At 13, Lovely (now 29) worked in the fields of one of the farm estates near Mudzi to help her mother provide for their household. At the estate Lovely met a young man, aged 18, who was kind enough to share some of his salary with her each time they were paid. Soon, Lovely found herself pregnant and the two decided to marry. The couple struggled to make ends meet and in the following years often went without sufficient food. Lovely gave birth to six children, three of whom did not survive. When her brother-in-law migrated to South Africa and found waged labour, her husband decided to join him. The couple sold their maize stores to buy a passport and pay for the man’s journey. Luckily, it did not take long for him to find employment – although he has never told Lovely what exactly it is that he does for a living. Since then, he has regularly sent her money, with which she can buy enough food and hire labourers to help her in her field. He even sent her a mobile phone that hangs on her chest like a necklace, on which he calls her every few days. Despite this overt commitment towards her, she fears that he will not be able to resist sexual temptations, following the general belief that men cannot go without sex for extended periods of time. “Those women in South Africa all want to have a Malawian man,” Lovely furthermore believes, “because they know that Malawians are hard workers.” Fearing that he will come back with ‘diseases’, Lovely spends part of the money that her husband sends to buy herbal medicines that keep him from cheating on her. [P2 1405, 1484; P3 0609]

Married Mudzi men who have migrated to South Africa are commonly assumed to have extramarital affairs, if not polygamous marriages, at their new homes [P2 1370, 1600; P3 0609]. Although these men’s promiscuity in South Africa cannot be ascertained, upon return to Mudzi for a brief vacation many – finally able to attract women because of their newly gained financial power – prove their infidelity with temporary sexual affairs within and around the village [P2 1561, 2166, 1636] (see also Chirwa 1997). The wives (and other sex partners) of migrant men are thus well aware of the HIV risks that they expose themselves to. However, despite the great HIV risk involved, and the high awareness of this risk, none of the migrants’ wives40 considered divorcing her husband. Instead, they encouraged him over the phone to stay faithful [P3 3860, 4006, 4019]. Several underwent or planned to undergo a HIV test after their husband had come home for a brief visit, arguing that they cannot know how he behaves ‘out there’ [P2 1370; P3 0752, 1371]. By finding out in time whether they had been infected, and accessing treatment if necessary, they hoped to contain the risk of becoming (too) ill. Furthermore some, like Lovely, paid folk healers for the service of safeguarding their husbands’ fidelity.

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40 Nine Mudzi women have a husband in South Africa, three others are married to a man working elsewhere in Malawi.
Apparently, the benefits of these women’s marriages outweighed the disadvantages, of which HIV risk is one (another sometimes being their residence at their husband’s natal village instead of their own, as described in Chapter 5). The benefits not only entail the direct material support that these women receive from their husbands, or can ask for in times of need. Their long-distance marriage combines a relatively secure livelihood and the respectability of being married, with a high degree of personal freedom. Contrary to women with a live-in husband, migrants’ wives do not have to stay at home to cater to a man. Furthermore, women whose husbands are present often complain that they never give money to be spent freely, only providing basic items that are needed in the household [P2 1618, 1643]. Women with absent husbands can spend the money that is sent to them as they please [P2 0118; P3 0996, 1858, 4019, 4105], although sometimes they are advised on this by their husbands (who are however not around to check whether their advice is indeed followed) [P2 1421, 1569; P3 0998, 1673, 3968, 4091].

Women consider themselves (and others) particularly at risk of HIV infection when “exchanging husbands too often” and when staying with a promiscuous husband [P3 2939–41, 2943–4, 3475]. As a result, fear of infection can be (and was) brought up by some women to justify their choice to remain with an unsatisfying husband [P3 2929, 2939–41, 3265, 3475], and by others to justify their decision to divorce an unsatisfactory husband [P2 1548; P3 1448, 2943–4, 3909]. Considering, however, the fact that none of the migrants’ wives actually eliminated this risk by ending the relationship with their – most likely unfaithful – husband, suggests that avoidance of HIV infection only becomes a decisive consideration when other factors valued in a marriage are unmet.

Women who prefer to stay married to their (suspected) promiscuous husbands rather opt for less radical measures to avert the unwanted consequences of his behaviour, as Lovely did by buying herbal medicines [see also P2 1910]. Many women, as described in the previous chapter, try to advise and encourage their husband to be faithful, or request their ankhoswe (marriage guardians) to do so. Some move on to more violent measures, generally directed at their husband’s lover [P2 1208, 1940]. However, as also described in the previous chapter, promiscuity is disliked by women primarily because it reduces the resources available to them (as these will be shared among multiple women), rather than because of a fear for HIV infection [P2 1561, 1893; P3 0841, 2329, 2340, 2468].

Several studies found rural Malawian men claiming to have become more selective in choosing sex partners, by turning to their social network for inquiries about the sexual history of their prospective sex partners to assess the risk involved (Kaler 2004a: 292–4, Peters et al. 2007: 43, Watkins 2004: 688–9), and preferring the less attractive, married, or very young – assuming such women are less likely to have had many sexual partners and be infected (Forster 2001: 251, Kaler 2004a: 292–4, Smith & Watkins 2005: 655). As discussed in the previous chapter, some
Mudzi women too take time before accepting or declining a proposal so as to inquire about their proposer’s personal background and characteristics. If it is found that he proposes to many women, this is generally considered a drawback – although not necessarily or solely because of the HIV risk that is involved, but rather or also because of it is taken to indicate a bleak prospect concerning relationship stability and profitabilit. Many girls and women, however, accept sexual proposals without lingering to gather such information, glad that someone has shown an interest in them and afraid that a delay would put off their proposer. Only when men seemed desperate to marry – which runs counter to the generally expected male behaviour – did women become so suspicious of ulterior motives that they decided to decline, taking it, not without reason, as a possible indication that he was HIV-positive and in urgent need of a future caretaker:

Wisikesi (30) received a marriage proposal from a man who had come to Mudzi to look for a wife. The man told her that he was cultivating so much cotton that he would be able to buy 100 bags of maize with the revenue, which he planned to resell once prices went up during the hunger season. Wisikesi did not trust his story, which sounded too good to be true, and refused to marry him. Recalling this incident, she and the other knitting women at our veranda commented that the man had afterwards continued to a neighbouring village, where another woman did accept his proposal. Instead of bringing her maize and money, however, the man became very ill and his wife is now just busy taking care of him. [P3 0538]

On her way to the nearest health clinic with a sick child, Sofia was proposed marriage by a passerby. The man said he had money and could take her child to the private hospital at Balaka, where services are much better than the free government clinics. Taking his hands out his pockets he showed her that they were full of money. Sofia had recently been abandoned by the father of her four children, and could certainly use some of that money. Nonetheless she refused his offer, because she found his eagerness suspicious. “Mwina ali ndi matenda” (Maybe he has diseases/HIV), she reasoned, “and therefore showed me all that money in advance” [instead of giving some after she accepted, which is more common]. [P2 1445]

These women, it seemed, did not in the first place fear becoming infected themselves, but rather having to take care of an ill, and thus non-supporting, husband.

My data thus confirm the often-unacknowledged finding that, despite apparent low levels of ABC adoption, rural Malawians do act upon the HIV risks that they face, albeit in locally adapted ways. Some resort to protective herbal medicines, try to persuade their husbands to be faithful, or have become more selective in their partner choice. This is not to say, as seems insinuated by some scholars, that women, within contextually defined limits, do their utmost best to avoid infection. The fact remains, in Mudzi at least, that avoiding HIV infection is generally not considered a priority (see also Dionne 2012).

Low priority of HIV prevention
Three factors seem to contribute to the low prioritization of HIV prevention in Mudzi. The first relates to the fact that there are many other, often more direct,
threats to life and livelihood besides HIV and AIDS. The second concerns the fatalistic perception of AIDS as an inevitable fact of life, and the third – a new factor – results from the free availability of an effective treatment. These factors add up to the relatively low weight given to preventing HIV transmission compared to the highly valued beneficial aspects of (unprotected) sexual activity. I will elaborate on each of the three factors in more detail here.

Firstly, in the experience of Mudzi villagers, AIDS is but one of many possible causes of death, or, put more broadly, one of the many potential problems of life [P3 1503, 2134]. Malaria, tuberculosis, and cholera frequently strike in Mudzi, in some cases with fatal results. In the year prior to our fieldwork, seven villagers had died of cholera. In 2001, a larger cholera outbreak killed many more in and around Mudzi. In the same year food shortages had been severe too, it is vividly recalled, and were the deathblow to several old, young, and weak villagers. Childbirth still takes many mothers’ lives, leading one informant to explain that the expression ali ndi pakati [she is in the middle/in between], commonly used to describe a pregnant women, refers to the fact that she is in a twilight zone between life and death, as she will soon either die or give life. It can be speculated that these various deaths resulted from a prior HIV infection, which affected the victims’ immune system and general health status. But as far as Mudzi villagers can see, they died from cholera, starvation, or delivery complications. The always-present threat of bewitchment, furthermore, haunts all villagers regardless of sex, age, or social status. Other, non-life-threatening difficulties faced on a daily basis have been described in Chapter 4, and are often of such an urgent nature that the possibility of dying from AIDS in some distant future becomes less relevant [e.g. P3 1501] (also Van den Borne 2005b).

A second factor contributing to the low priority given to HIV prevention stems from one of the initial interpretations of AIDS. Because the first victims were from among the better-off elites from town and migrants returning home with cash earned abroad, it made sense to classify their cruel death as bewitchment by someone less endowed and jealous (Lwanda 2004: 32). While villagers now basically understand the medical side of HIV infection, this traditional explanatory model is still called upon to explain why only some individuals become infected after unsafe sexual intercourse while others do not. This seeming randomness is taken to indicate that HIV infection ultimately is a result of witchcraft [P2 1018, 1332; P3 0610, 1491] (see also Niehof & Price 2008: 148–9). Bryceson et al. (2004: 31) found that 60 percent

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41 On average, Malawian women have an estimated 1-in-36 chance of dying as a result of pregnancy-related complications (UNICEF 2008). The risk for rural women is likely to be higher.

42 The Steven Paas ChiChewa-English dictionary gives a different explanation, stating that the expression refers to the growing belly at the mid-point of a pregnant woman’s body.
of rural Malawian households they studied that experienced an AIDS death cited bewitchment as the cause of the deceased’s infection. Making sure not to arouse jealousy or otherwise offend fellow villagers helps to avoid bewitchment – but such offenses can also occur unwittingly or unwillingly, thus placing witchcraft beyond one’s personal sphere of control. Logically then, whether and when HIV or AIDS may strike is by many also considered beyond their personal control.

Women in Mudzi, moreover, believe that they can be unconsciously infected by men who come to have sex with them in their dreams. On several occasions women told Gertrude that they had dreamt of having sex with a certain Mudzi man. One had subsequently scolded the man in real life, warning him to never do this again [P3 0592]. Another woman expressed her worry about a potential HIV infection now that she had dreamt of having sex with a certain fellow villager [P2 0741, see also P8 0025]. The possibility of being subjected to intercourse while asleep and unaware must add to the feeling that avoidance of HIV infection is not just a matter of making the right choices, but of fate as well.

This anticipative attitude may be reinforced by the disproportionate attention that development agencies devote to HIV and AIDS compared to other health risks (GoM 2010b: 49). The massive scale on which educational messages invade daily life in Mudzi may well give the impression that AIDS is an omnipresent and inescapable threat. Campaigns that aim to alert the public and reduce stigma by emphasizing that anyone can become infected, further feed the perception of HIV as unavoidable and beyond one’s power to control (Bryceson et al. 2004: 70, Kaler 2003: 358) [P3 2080]. The longitudinal MDICP survey found a severe overestimation of the probability of HIV transmission after one act of sexual intercourse (Dionne 2008: 3, Kaler 2003: 356–8). Sixty-one percent of respondents were certain that one act of coitus with an infected partner leads to HIV transmission, and 38 percent believed the risk to be high. It is not unlikely that this overestimation results from the ‘bombardment’ of educational messages (Bryceson et al. 2004: 24) stressing the risk of infection but neglecting to inform about realistic chances of contracting HIV. In reality, HIV is one of the least contagious viruses around, with infection probability estimated to be as low as 1 in 1000.43 Several studies indicate that the overestimation of risk has led many Malawians to presume that they must surely be infected already, nullifying their need to change any high-risk behaviour (Arrehag et al. 2006: 107, Kaler 2003: 364).

43 Under normal circumstances (meaning here heterosexual vaginal intercourse, vagina sufficiently lubricated, and the partners free of genital ulcers) the probability of contracting HIV during unprotected sex with an infected partner is estimated to be as low as 1 in 1000 (Gray et al. 2001). Only in the early and late stages of infection, when the viral load peaks, is the likelihood of transmission relatively high (Pilcher et al. 2004). Genital ulcers and unlubricated sex may create opportunities for the virus to enter the body and therefore increase transmission risk by two- to tenfold (Geubbels & Bowie 2006: 116).
In Mudzi, men and women alike expressed their acceptance of AIDS as a fact of life [P3 0435, 1280, 1367, 1503, 1989, 2134, 3549] (see also Bryceson et al. 2004, Kaler 2004a). Various villagers argued that “AIDS has come for us human beings, not for animals or trees,” indicating that they consider AIDS to simply be a part of the human fate [P3 1503, 1989, 2134, 3549]. “It is our time,” others said acquiescently [P3 0435, 1367]. Kaler (2004a: 289), also writing about rural Balaka, notes that depending on the situation, individuals may switch between this inevitability perspective and an agency perspective, which holds that AIDS risk can be purposefully reduced, as also described in the previous subsection. I will return to this switching between perspectives and discourses shortly.

The (partly) fatalistic attitude radiated by Mudzi villagers is not unique to HIV and AIDS, but cuts across many spheres of daily life. Comments from Mudzi villagers indicate that investing is often condemned as presumptuous, as it is taken to reveal an (unjustified) expectation of a positive outcome:

Whilst pregnant, Chikondi (28) did not dare to join the other Mudzi women in learning from Gertrude how to knit baby shoes and suits, because then “people will say that I know already that my baby will live, while it may be born and leave again after a few days” [P3 0869]. Another woman, who had no children yet but hoped to become pregnant soon because her husband was about to come home from South Africa, did knit baby clothes and was indeed ridiculed for her anticipation of a successful pregnancy: “What are you doing that for?? Maybe you will fail to give birth, and then you will have to sell all the baby items that you knitted!” the women around her laughed. [P3 1816]

The few young women who had set their minds on finishing school also faced discouraging comments, such as “You just wait, we will not see you become a nurse. Somebody will cheat you [get you pregnant]! [P3 0619], and “Why don’t you just get married? Don’t you know that it’s useless? There are no jobs anyway.” [P3 1636]

It seems that Mudzi villagers are conditioned, by both tangible setbacks and social pressure, not to expect much good to come and consequentially to refrain from making investments in a (potentially) better future. The many uncertainties that they face on a daily basis, and constantly changing contexts in which they try to make a living require flexibility and anticipation, as well as a high level of acceptance.44 Anticipating HIV infection as a likely possibility and refraining from efforts to avoid it, fits well into the general compliant attitude.

The third factor contributing to the low priority of HIV prevention results from the recently introduced free access to treatment (see Chapter 2). Just like other

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44 The come-what-may outlook on life corresponds to the general experience of life as circular or seasonal rather than linear, as described in Chapter 4. Having witnessed two annual cycles, in Mudzi and two pilot sites, I got the impression that villagers were simply used to the fact that scarcity and abundance alternate. As much as hunger recurs practically each year, it is always followed by a period in which food is excessively available. How long this period of abundance lasts depends on external factors and personal investments, but it (usually) comes anyhow – making the season of scarcity easier to bear and accept.
fatal diseases in the past have become curable with Western medicine, HIV and AIDS now seem to have been made containable too. Once diagnosed with HIV at one of the local health clinics near Mudzi, patients are referred to Balaka hospital. If they are found to be in an advanced stage of infection, they are entitled to receive free antiretroviral (ARV) treatment as well as counselling about living with the virus. Mudzi men and women see fellow villagers fall ill, become weak and thin, bearing down on death. When starting treatment, however, most of the patients recover amazingly quickly, begin looking healthy and strong again, and taking part in community life as usual [P2 1536, 1871, 1884; P3 2583, 2665]. “As if she is not HIV positive,” one women approvingly commented about a fellow Mudzi woman who had recently started treatment [P2 1536]. Another woman chatting at our veranda once explained that “People are not afraid [of AIDS], because of ARV medication. They make you live for a long time.” [P3 1503, see also P2 1411, P3 3549]. When government health staff had instructed Mudzi’s Group Village Headwoman to address her people on various health issues including HIV and AIDS, she organized a meeting and duly urged her public to practice safe sex. Attempting to add weight to these words, she then warned that they must do so “because the hospital does not have enough ARV medication!” [P2 1336, see also P3 1572]. The existence of an obviously effective treatment that is available at no cost calms the senses, and counters the uncomfortable, externally demanded preoccupation with avoiding infection.

As discussed earlier in this section, rather than avoiding HIV infection per se, Mudzi villagers wish to avoid the impression of being HIV positive, as this would directly jeopardize their day-to-day survival (or at least their quality of life). Changing sexual behaviour in accordance with the ABC promotions may arouse suspicion because it associates one with the virus (UNAIDS 2003: 3), and may thus also for this reason be omitted. Fear of being identified with HIV furthermore keeps many from testing their blood, because once known it is difficult to conceal one’s positive status. Suset (23), for example, stopped breastfeeding her baby before it had reached the usual age for weaning – which was in line with the then-current health instructions for mothers living with HIV. Fellow village women quickly noticed this, and interpreted it as indicating an HIV-positive status [P2 1757; P3 2302].

To receive treatment, furthermore, patients must go to Balaka hospital every few

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45 Many hospitals in Malawi are not equipped to measure the viral load and number of CD4 molecules in a patient’s blood, which is the most accurate way to determine the stage of HIV infection or AIDS. Instead, doctors are advised to use a WHO checklist based on symptomatic criteria like unexplainable persisting fever, weight loss, anaemia, and tuberculosis (MoH 2008: 16–7).

46 Costs may be made for transport to the hospital, which is located 15 kilometres from Mudzi. A bicycle taxi costs 150 to 200 MK for one way, approximately 0.75 to 1 Euro at the time of the research. Alternatively the journey can, and often is, undertaken by foot, or on a privately owned or borrowed bicycle at no cost.
weeks for check-ups and new rations of AIDS inhibitors. When Jeneti (37) began to regularly travel to Balaka, under various pretences, it was soon speculated that she did so because of an HIV infection [P3 2583, see also P3 2302]. The regulation that patients only receive free ARVs if they bring with them a “witness” (as Mudzi villagers call it) or “buddy” (as development professionals call it), which is intended to stimulate openness, makes testing and treatment even less appealing. The chief of Mudzi A had been ill frequently ever since we arrived in his village. His wife told us that he once went to the health clinic because of this sickliness, but upon return he had torn up a referral letter to Balaka hospital as well as his complete health records book [P2 1332, see also P3 2727]. He died shortly after our fieldwork had finished. In line with the chief’s choice to deny his (apparent) HIV infection, several Mudzi women were explicit and resolute about their preference to remain oblivious of their HIV status as long as they feel fine, only facing the problems when they may arise [P2 1655; P3 0773].

Thus, on the one hand Mudzi villagers state that their fear of AIDS has diminished as a result of the availability of effective and free-of-charge treatment. On the other hand, however, few actually get tested so as to potentially access this treatment. Furthermore, while employing a discourse of accepting AIDS as part of the human fate and of HIV infection as beyond one’s personal sphere of control, sero-positive others are blamed for having brought upon themselves the curse of AIDS, and active attempts are made to reduce transmission probabilities when infection risk is considered high. The seemingly inconsistent ways in which Mudzi men and women try to deal with the many uncomfortable realities that they face on a daily basis reveal their necessarily pragmatic agency. These seeming inconsistencies fit within the notion of ‘judicious opportunism’, a concept that was coined by Johnson-Hanks (2005), discussed in Chapter 1, and will be further elaborated upon in this chapter’s conclusion.

Conclusion

In light of this study’s core question of whether female economic empowerment will lead women to make safer sexual choices, this chapter delved into the sub-question of emic perceptions of safe and unsafe sex. For women to make ‘safer’ sexual choices, they must firstly perceive of their current practices as unsafe, secondly feel incentives to change these, and lastly feel capable of changing them. Proponents of female economic empowerment as a means to halt the AIDS pandemic locate the main problem at this third requirement. They presuppose that women like those in Mudzi experience their sexual practices as ‘unsafe’ and would prefer to change this risky behaviour, but lack the means to do so. However, the data presented in this chapter, like that of the previous chapter, suggest that it is rather the first two requirements that remain unfulfilled, making the third of no consequence
As concerns the first requirement I argue that what is understood to be safe and unsafe sexual practice differs between Mudzi villagers and the official public health view. In the latter, the criteria ‘safe’ and ‘unsafe’ purely concern the risk of HIV transmission, in a distilled and condensed form. In real-life experience, however, HIV and AIDS manifest themselves within a myriad of interrelated factors from which these cannot sensibly be disengaged. For Mudzi women, the unsafeness of a sexual practice may relate to the risk of contracting diseases, but also (and often more prominently so) to the risk of losing a partner, for example by denying him sex or demanding condom use. Safe sexual practice from a Mudzi point of view may include, for example, conceiving a child to create a lasting relationship of support. Playing it ‘safe’ in Mudzi terms thus refers to broader livelihood concerns, which may be negatively affected by what formal health experts recommend as ‘safe’ sexual practices.

An important aspect of playing it ‘safe’ – in Mudzi terms – is conforming to the community’s expectations for proper female sexual behaviour. As has been the case for many centuries throughout Central Africa, in Mudzi the vital importance of procreation and sex is drummed (quite literally so, as most instructing is done through the medium of songs) into the minds of youngsters during elaborate initiation rites, and repetitively brought back to memory throughout the rest of their life course. The *miyambo* [traditions, cultural values] that the youngsters are taught stress that sex is vital for personal wellbeing, the relationship between a husband and wife, as well as the community at large. Essentially, sexual intercourse is encouraged, provided that certain rules are observed.

To some extent, public health HIV-prevention messages coincide with these pre-existing rules that prescribe under which circumstances sex should be refrained from, especially where extramarital sex is concerned. Encouraging as this may seem, there are three (discouraging) remarks to be made about it. Firstly, the exclusively negative approach to sex in these public health messages may make them too far removed from the overall positive emic perception of sex to be taken seriously. Furthermore, the traditional norms prohibiting extramarital sex are formally subscribed to by all, yet informally accepted as not always achievable. This gives ample opportunity to sidestep formal HIV-prevention recommendations too. The third remark relates to the fluidity of the marriage concept that I have described in the previous chapter. This vagueness makes it difficult to discern when a certain sexual encounter would be categorized as extramarital, or, put differently, makes it easy to categorize a sexual relationship as marital (and thus legitimate and harmless) at any given time.

As concerns the second requirement, on incentives, I argue that on Mudzi women’s scale of the pros and cons of sex, HIV risk is a con with relatively little weight that is often outweighed by the many pros. Mudzi women certainly do acknowledge the risk of HIV infection as a disadvantage of sex. The practices that they consider to be
particularly risky in relation to HIV are a large number of subsequent partners, and marriage with a promiscuous husband. In neither case, however, does the perceived HIV risk necessarily trigger women to end the practice so as to protect themselves against infection – although some measures (often others than those advised by health professionals) may be taken to reduce transmission risk. Sometimes women do assert fear of infection as reason for refusing a sexual proposal, for reducing the number of sex partners, or for divorcing a promiscuous husband. This, however, seems to be the case only when few advantages of a relationship can be discerned. My data thus suggest that most women feel no urgent need to act upon the threat of HIV infection – in other words, only a minor weight is given to this consideration. As explained in this chapter there are various reasons underlying the little weight given to HIV prevention, including 1) the fact that AIDS is but one of the many threats that Mudzi villagers face, 2) a communally upheld claim that HIV cannot be effectively avoided anyway, and 3) the availability of effective treatment at low or no cost.

Besides the minor weight given to risk of HIV infection as a con of sex, there are, as mentioned, often multiple stimulators at play that encourage women to engage in sex. These stimulators include the high ideological value attached to sex as procreative, pleasurable, and mystically powerful. Sex, furthermore, has certain important practical advantages too, especially for achieving the valued status of motherhood. Furthermore, as explained in the previous chapter, women and girls can through sex access the various benefits attached to having a male partner – some of these for as long as the relationship lasts, or even beyond if pregnancies occur, as (relatives of) ex-partners may be pressured or feel inclined to provide occasional support for their children. Sex thus fits within both short- and long-term survival strategies.

Throughout this chapter, as in previous chapters, several inconsistencies or ‘double standards’ were revealed in Mudzi villagers’ dealings with the world in which they find themselves. The concept of judicious opportunism helps to understand their swaying attitudes towards sexual practices in general, and HIV risk in specific. Tactics are decided upon as opportunities – or problems – arise, and are adjusted or abandoned when perceived necessary or advantageous, as the context changes. In the case of dealing with HIV risk, it is sometimes preferred to downplay the severity of this risk, both towards others and towards oneself, while at other times there may be good reasons to acknowledge the risk and attempt to diminish it (or no good reasons not to do so). The choices that Mudzi men and women make are necessarily adaptive and constantly renegotiated to best fit a certain situation without blocking too many future options. These choices would therefore be difficult, if not impossible, to structurally transform into one static set of behaviours, such as that promoted by the professional health sector.
Overall, the data presented in this chapter show that sex is understood as much more than a potential source of HIV infection. The ABC prevention measures recommended by public health campaigns run counter to what Mudzi women have been socialized to consider proper female behaviour, as well as their perceived need to attach a man to them and the indispensable role of sex in that endeavour. Changing their sexual practices to be in line with what officials have branded as ‘safe’ often would do little good to women’s general livelihood security, and may even be detrimental to it.
Of cash flows and good friends: 
Money versus social capital

Introduction

The need for and exchange of money play important roles in the transactional sex paradigm that this study scrutinizes. The transactional sex paradigm implies that women’s sexual choices will become less risky if they have a sufficiently reliable and substantial source of income other than their sexual partners. What is overlooked in this (admittedly simplified) assumption, is that in resource-poor communities like that of Mudzi, money leads a ‘social life’ far more complex than suggested by its typical depiction as a neutral object of exchange. Arjun Appadurai (1986) has argued that commodities, like persons, are thoroughly socialized things.

Tracking the ‘biographies’ of things can reveal much about the meaning and values that are attributed to them in different settings and by different actors. He writes: “Even though from a theoretical point of view human actors encode things with significance, from a methodological point of view it is the things-in-motion that illuminate their human and social context” (1986: 5).1 In this chapter I track the social life of money in Mudzi, revealing the politics that surround it.

There are various entry points through which money flows into the larger Mudzi area (by which I mean to include the various small markets in the vicinity of the village). These entry points mainly consist of the salaries of employed husbands.

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1 The actor-network theory developed by Michel Callon, Bruno Latour, and John Law suggests a comparable methodological approach to social science research, asserting that objects should be treated, and thus studied, as parts of social networks and as co-factors in shaping the social interactions of which they form a part.
living in one of the villages, financial support sent by partners or relatives based elsewhere, urban traders that come to buy up crops, and development projects and microcredit schemes. Only a limited number of villagers have access to these external sources, and usually only at limited occasions. Immediately after money enters the community through these selective entry points, it begins to circulate, also reaching the villagers who were not its initial receivers. The ways in which money is pushed and pulled around offer great insights into Mudzi women’s livelihood strategies and form the topic of the first part of this chapter. In particular, they reveal the drive to invest in social capital, which in turn reveals the great value that Mudzi villagers attach to social investment. The second part of this chapter therefore delves deeper into investments in and benefits of social capital, culminating in an assessment of sexual relationships as one important form of social capital.

Although there is no universally agreed upon definition of ‘social capital’, in its most basic form it is commonly conceptualized as a productive asset based in social relationships. In this study I take it to mean ‘the ability of individuals and collective actors to mobilize resources through their network of more or less durable social relations’. This definition pulls from two other uses of the term: Nombo & Niehof (2008: 242) and Adler & Kwon (2000: 93). The ‘social’ dimension of the concept appears clearly from its just-mentioned embeddedness in social networks. The label ‘capital’ reveals its economic aspect, in the sense that investments in it lead to (expectations of) returns (Lin 2001: 19 in Ferlander 2007: 116). There is a general consensus among social scientists that social capital is of vital importance for the day-to-day survival of resource-deprived populations, who tend to have few other ‘capitals’ (be it financial, physical, human, or natural capital) on which to depend (Grootaert & Van Bastelaer 2002). Following this view, the concept has come to be embraced in policy circles as an exclusively positive asset that can and should be built upon in order to empower the poor and help them climb out of poverty (e.g. World Bank Report 2001). Some authors have noted, however, that social capital may have harmful consequences too and need not always work out positively for all actors concerned (Adler & Kwon 2000, Du Toit et al. 2007, Portes 2003). As will become clear from the analyses in this chapter, social capital is indeed critical for survival in an insecure setting like Mudzi. Yet, precisely because the need to create and maintain social capital is so strong, it not only facilitates but also hampers individual and community progress. Furthermore, although at first sight social capital may seem an easily attained asset – within reach even for the poor with little other capital at their disposal – our data challenge this presumption. As already mentioned in the previous chapter and further elaborated upon here, in Mudzi a strong interdependence exists between social capital and access to other capitals.
Mudzi’s money management

Managing money

Most days the women living around us possessed no cash at all, not even the tiniest amount. This was partly because money is simply hard to come by and when procured, it is usually only in small quantities. It is too, however, because whatever money these women could get a hold of, was swiftly spent, which soon left them empty-handed again. In such an environment of monetary scarcity, simple facts that may easily go unnoticed by someone unfamiliar with bare poverty become highly significant. When someone in Mudzi turns on a radio, smokes a cigarette, or washes clothes, this is immediately noted and taken to reveal that the person in question must have had some money at his or her disposal – in these cases to buy batteries, tobacco, or soap [P3 1104, 1739, 2456, see also P3 2208], or that he or she for some reason received these items from someone who had money to spend. If the source or reasons are unclear, speculations abound [P2 0032, 0795, 1071; P3 2295, 2302, 2372, 2507]. Possession of money is thus not an ordinary occurrence; in Mudzi it is considered a remarkable and indicative phenomenon.

To gain some understanding of the ways in which money is handled at an individual level, I asked four Mudzi women to keep track of their daily incomes and expenditures (including non-monetary commodity exchanges) for three and a half months. The four women were selected on the basis of their literacy, unmarried status, prime age, and representation of various livelihood situations (one receiving regular allowances from a development organization, one occasionally brewing liquor for sale, one with an on-and-off partner, and one without any apparent source of income) [P3 1803]. The choice of these particular women was also derived from my curiosity about their livelihoods, as well as my sympathy for them. In three of the cases, furthermore, I wished to help them financially in a discreet way – hence without signalling too openly that I felt they needed my help, nor arousing jealousy among other villagers who would (rightfully) have demanded support too if I had given the money freely. I realize that paying the women for this assignment interfered with getting a clean picture of their usual incomes and thus expenditures. However, I feel it would have been unethical not to compensate them for a tedious job that will most likely never bear them any fruits. By paying them only once within the three and a half months period (and once at the end) I aimed to minimize the ‘disruption’.

Turning a disadvantage into an advantage, the provision of a salary gave me insights into the women’s financial decisions after receiving a relatively large sum of money. The fact, furthermore, that the money was quickly spent [e.g. P3 2372, 2390], led me to believe that the disruption of the usual course of affairs was relatively mild, as it lasted only a short time. The data thus collected provided a far from exhaustive but nonetheless informative insight into the ways in which money flows in and out of the community, but particularly
also into the ways in which it is circulated around within the community. These ‘money and commodity flow’ diaries largely confirmed in detail what I observed, but also revealed some important dynamics that I would not have noticed otherwise.

Suset is one of the four women who kept a diary for me, from which I deduced the following impression of the ‘social life’ of money:

Suset (23) is one of Mudzi’s young mothers, unmarried at this time of the study. Like her grandmother, who raised her and lives next door, Suset brews liquor for sale whenever her budget allows her to buy ingredients. During her late teens, Suset had been in a steady relationship with a young Mudzi man, from whom she has a now three-year-old daughter. When one day this man found Suset with a liquor customer inside her house, he suspected that she was cheating on him and ended their relationship. Two years later, Suset gave birth to another daughter, from a man who had not told her that he was already married elsewhere and had no intentions to leave his wife for her.

On the day that Suset starts keeping track of her income and expenditure, she has no money. That day she receives a bar of soap from her grandmother so that she can wash her baby’s diaper. The next day, a customer comes to pay the 30MK\(^2\) that he owed her for the liquor he drank earlier. Immediately, Suset spends the money by going to the mill to have some maize ground, and by buying a spoon of paraffin, one box of matches, and a piece of sugar cane as snack on her way back from the mill. For three subsequent days, she does not ‘find any money, and eats the maize she has just ground, accompanied with okra or pumpkins from her field. On the fourth day she decides to sell the husks that were left over after grinding the maize to the village’s pig-rearing group for fodder. She had hoped to use the husks to brew liquor, but lacks sufficient money to buy the other ingredients. To the 20MK that she earned with selling the husks she adds 50MK that she begged from her grandmother (who that day received Orphan Care money\(^3\)) and buys soap for washing clothes and her body. Several days later, the father of her first-born child comes by and gives her toothpaste to apply on a wound that the child has on her head. He also gives four bars of Ufresh soap, and some Vaseline body oil. Some days later he even gives one kilogram of goat meat, which she shares with her grandmother and sister who lives on the other side of their grandmother’s house. The father of Suset’s last-born daughter also comes by that week and gives her some paraffin that lasts almost three evenings. In between, Suset earns 50MK by carrying maize from the field of the sister of her grandmother – a woman I categorized as one of the best-off villagers (see Chapter 3), and 100MK by picking cotton for a farmer in one of the larger villages nearby. In most cases the small amounts of cash that she ‘finds are quickly spent on supplementary food, soap, matches, and paraffin. All of these are bought in small quantities: just enough cooking oil and salt to spice up one meal, a spoonful of paraffin to light up one evening. Meanwhile Suset keeps on the lookout for someone who is able to lend her a more substantial amount of money to buy ingredients for a new supply of liquor. Eventually a regular customer from an adjacent village lends her 300MK, to be repaid without interest. When weeks later I pay her 2000MK for the work of keeping the diary – for Suset an unusually large lump sum of money – she first pays off small debts that she had outstanding to various fellow villagers. She then gives 200MK to her grandmother “for soap” and 30MK to her sister for relish “because she has none.” In the days that follow, Suset buys nice food for herself (dried and fresh fish, tomatoes, onions,

\(^2\) Approximately 0,15 Euro’s at the time of the research. Please keep in mind a conversion rate of 200MK as approximate equivalent of one Euro for the remainder of this excerpt of Suset’s diary.

\(^3\) Households that have been registered as taking care of one or more orphans can go to receive a monthly allowance of 1500MK (7.50 Euro at the time of the research) from a NGO based at the nearest trading center.
cooking oil, and salt) as well as ingredients to brew liquor. When her grandmother says she craves beans, Suset buys her these. Her sister comes to beg tomatoes, and later soap to wash her children. Suset buys her the tomatoes as well as a bar of the cheapest soap. Various people beg her to loan them tiny amounts of money, 10MK to 200MK, to which Suset complies. By selling the liquor she brewed, she receives bits of money on some of the subsequent days, ranging from 50MK to 500MK a day. She spends this income on tomatoes, dried fish, sugar cane, bread buns that she shares with her grandmother, soap, painkillers, matches, and batteries for her radio. She also buys medicines for her grandmother. Again, some cash is lent out to fellow villagers, while some other loans are paid back. [P8 0049–0064]

While the 2000MK I gave to Suset were soon gone, she benefitted from it for an extended period of time because she invested it in such ways that it could be accessed again later. By buying ingredients for liquor, she put herself back in business, which supplied her with a profit return spread out over many days – even longer than her stock lasts as many customers drink ‘on tick’, paying whenever they have some money at hand. By gifting soap and food to her grandmother and sister, Suset invigorated their reciprocal relationship, thus increasing her chances for support in future times of need. Lastly, by loaning out small amounts of money to various people, Suset assured herself of access to (repayment) money when required, and furthermore increased the likeliness of being granted a loan herself when in need. She still had to spend days without any money – when no liquor was paid for, and no loans were paid back. But she had some maize to eat, and, at the time of the diary keeping, a field of vegetables and legumes to accompany it. If

Soap has an exceptional position in Mudzi, as it seems to have throughout much of Eastern and Southern Africa, if not beyond (e.g. Burke 1996). Money that men give to their sexual partner, or that women share between themselves, is often denoted as ‘ya sopo’ [P2 0626, 1041, 1131]. Ndalama ya sopo is best translated as ‘soap money’. (The noun for ‘money’, ndalama, is dropped, and only the grammatical form of the connecting ya (meaning ‘of’) indicates that it actually refers to ndalama.) This does not mean, however, that soap is always bought with the money that was indicated as ya sopo. In many cases the expression seems to function rather as a metaphor [P2 0637, 1007, 1131; P3 2077]. For example, when abandoned by the father of her four children, Sofia (25) exclaimed: “Now where am I going to find money for soap?” [P2 1405, see also P2 0563, 1131; P3 3455–6]. In theory, food comes from women’s own fields, and soap is, then, considered the one basic necessity for which money is needed (and can thus be claimed) [P2 1252; P3 0495, 0505, 0703, 0705, 0744, 1428]. Although ‘ya sopo’ is not always actually used to purchase soap, the metaphor does point out the centrality of soap amidst all other basic necessities (see Burke 1996 for an interesting analysis of this historical grounds for this). Indeed, soap stands out by far as number one on all women’s non-food wish list [P2 0637, 0924, 0944, 0957, 0961, 0974, 0992, 1007, 1082, 1110, 1131, 1461, 1920, 2030, 2042, 2080, 2081, 2114, 2119, 2135; P3 0407, 0699, 0701, 0703, 0705, 0732, 0738, 0780, 0968, 0991, 0968, 0999, 1124, 1264, 1462]. Lack of soap is taken to indicate a shamefully severe level of destitution [P2 1667; P3 2805] (see also Burke 1996). When discussing with Gertrude how best to remunerate the village women whom we interviewed, she insisted that soap would be most appreciated, despite the fact that the hunger season had started. In the money and commodity flow diaries, soap was the only commodity of which the different brand names were (almost consistently) mentioned. Based on these data I contend that soap is not considered a luxury item by itself (only nicely scented and wrapped soap is) – contrary to the interpretations of some transactional sex scholars (e.g. Luke & Kurz 2002: 20, Silberschmidt & Rasch 2001: 1820, Swidler & Watkins 2007, Wamoyi et al. 2010). Swidler & Watkins (2007: 147–8,151), for example, interpret soap as a (small) luxury and based on that argue that women who receive or desire soap from a sex partner cannot be very poor (assuming that the very poor would only request foodstuff).
nothing was ready for picking in Suset’s own field, a neighbour would often share some of her produce. Otherwise, Suset and her children just ate maize porridge for a day, hoping that she would be more lucky in finding some money or food in the following days.

Suset’s diary shows that she has numerous potential sources of support to turn to. The strongest reciprocal relationships in terms of frequency of transactions are with the close kin living near her, especially her grandmother (who lives with two orphaned grandchildren) and her elder sister (unmarried mother of two children at the time of the diary keeping). With other women in her direct neighbourhood Suset at times shares relish (raw from her field or already prepared), and borrows or loans money. Further down in the village live the paternal grandmothers of her daughters, who Suset at times approaches for meeting somewhat larger needs of the children, for example health care expenses. On several occasions these women came by themselves to gift food, soap, or clothes for their grandchild [P8 0069]. The fathers of Suset’s children, living with their wives in other villages, too gifted or could be begged for support. These men gave in on some occasions, while scolding her away at other times. When a field officer of a microcredit agency visited Mudzi to inform villagers about loan options (formally intended to be invested in business), Suset decided to accept his offer so she could afford a desperately needed new roof on her house. She paid back the loan and interest through her liquor brewing, gifts from ex-partners, and loans from fellow villagers, especially from the paternal grandmother of her first child, whose husband runs the one small store in Mudzi.

The diaries of the other women are not much different. They mainly show, time and again, that when money comes in, it is readily spent. That this is common practice throughout Mudzi was particularly well demonstrated when villagers received payment for their cash crop, cotton, which yielded about 15,000MK 5 on average. Within days after selling most of Mudzi’s farmers had spent all of their profits [P2 1326; P3 2637, 2681, see also P2 1232, 1246, 1248, 1254; P3 2588]. Part of it was used to repay debts that had been made earlier in anticipation of the upcoming wealth, for example for alcoholic beverages (mostly by men) and meat (various villagers slaughtered a goat or cow, selling the meat to their fellow villagers who were to repay after selling their maize or cotton) [P2 1839, 1987, 2185; P3 2499, 2573]. The remaining money was spent on clothes, dried fish and other luxury food, soap, body lotion, umbrellas, cell phones, iron sheets, transport to relatives, school fees, and folk healers’ services and medicines. This was a perfect time to spend, as most villagers had money at the same time, so purchases were unlikely to trigger much begging, jealousy, or suspicion about the source of one’s wealth. Some villagers bought maize to add to their own yield. A few men simply disappeared

5 Equivalent to approximately 75 Euro at the time of the research.
with their (own or household’s) profit, only to return emptyhanded some days later. Throughout the village men and women began to play cards, contributing money or maize to the jackpot [P2 1683, 1698, 1761, 1789, 1794]. In short, the cotton money soon vanished.

It seems, from both the diaries and our observations, that a Mudzi woman tends to spend her money in three hierarchically organized ways: firstly to purchase a limited number of household necessities and supplementary food for her own household and to a lesser extent for those closely related to her; secondly to lend it out (without profit margin) to persons in her wider social network; and lastly to pay off debts she has made earlier with those same social connections. A recent study quantifying cash transfers in a Malawian village community confirms the high frequency of these between village members, writing that the number of informal transactions “dwarfed” the number of transactions with commercial banks by a factor seven (Stuart et al. 2011: 2). In Mudzi, the informal borrowings usually consist of very small amounts, say 10 to 100 hundred Kwacha, or 5 to 50 Eurocents [e.g. P2 0387, 0724, 1232, 1248, 1328, 1597, 1832, 1870; P3 0797, 0914, 0915, 1040, 1095, 2281, 2585, 3770; P8 0073]. When receiving a relatively large amount of money, some women were quick to hire labour to help them cultivate their fields, even though shortly before and surely soon after they scrambled for food, which I will further elaborate upon below.

Most days, the diaries and our observations indicate, women just make do with what they have. If there is money, they eat nice food. If there is no money, they are (usually) satisfied with whatever the land around them offers. When money is so plentiful that a luxury like batteries can be afforded, they listen to the radio as often as possible for as long as the batteries last. Before and after that, they simply spend their days without radio sounds. Things become different when emergencies occur which require instant solutions – regardless of the availability of money. Most often these concern ailments of either the woman herself or one of her children. Such aching bodies are preferably ‘treated’ with a quick-fix painkiller (a ‘treatment’ often prescribed by medical doctors too when proper medication is unavailable or unaffordable). Suddenly faced with a need for money, women appeal to the various fellow villagers who had earlier borrowed a tiny bit of money from them. Chances are that at least one of them has or can access the few Kwacha’s requested at that moment.

Notably, the need for a painkiller seems to be considered a particularly legitimate reason to inconvenience others with requests for pay back – possibly because it radiates urgency, indicates need instead of mere desire, and portrays the money collector as victim rather than perpetrator. It excuses him or her for the request that could otherwise be interpreted as based on anti-social self-interest. A desperate need for painkillers is therefore at times deployed by women to conceal their actual reason for which they request pay back (or loan). At other times women requested
pay back to buy painkillers and actually used it for that purpose too, while they had money available to buy it themselves. This money was then used for other purposes. Apparently, being in real need of a painkiller is considered an opportunity to ask for pay back that should not be missed out on.

It seems that the continuous loaning and borrowing back and forth within the community serves as an informal storage mechanism. The money is out of one’s own hands, and so protected against temptations to, for example, spend it on a savoury alternative (e.g. dried fish) to whatever relish is in season and thus eaten each and every day for weeks at a time (e.g. green leaves, cow peas). More importantly maybe, it cannot be begged for or claimed by others who may need money for food, medical expenses, or funeral costs. Such money is out of direct reach, yet potentially accessible in times of emergency.

Social pressure to share
There are several reasons likely to explain why Mudzi villagers so quickly dispose of the little money they can find, which entail both ‘push’ and ‘pull’ factors. With push factors I mean the negative consequences of holding on to money, and with pull factors the positive consequences of expending money. One of the push factors hinted at already is a social dynamic that has been noted and described by anthropologists since the earliest studies in the region (e.g. Mitchell 1956 on the Yao, Richards 1939: 201 in Zambia) as elsewhere (Foster 1965, Geertz 1963, Hyden 1980, Kimambo et al. 2008, Scott 1976), which is the strong moral obligation to share. Mitchell (1956) described how among the Yao of southern Malawi deficit households had a right to receive food and other assistance from surplus households in the same sorority group. More recently also it was written about rural Malawi that:

An ill person needs help; healthy individuals in the household or other households in the neighbourhood are expected and obliged to provide that help. A bereaved family needs to be consoled; other families in a collective are expected and obliged to do so. A household experiencing food shortage asks for help; the household with enough food is obliged and expected to share (Mtika 2000: 347).

Mitchell (1956) wrote that a villager who ignored or neglected this obligation would face criticism and eventually even exclusion – which would in turn deprive him or her from all social and economic security. During our fieldwork, we saw

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6 Not only villagers who ignore the social norm to share face criticism and disgrace, all those who deviate from the norms that were presumably set out by the ancestors risk reprimanding from their fellow villagers. For examples from Mudzi of disapproval particularly of (suspected attempts to) personal advancement see P2 0123, 0142, 1056, 1572; P3 0404, 0588, 0619, 0785, 1224, 1253, 1264, 1470, 1503, 2026, 2777. For critiques on socializing with Gertrude and me as a perceived means to accessing resources through us, see P2 1534; P3 0677, 1253, 1264.
some examples of this ‘levelling’ mechanism at work [e.g. P2 0619, 1056], such as the following:

During our stay in Mudzi, one man in particular was at times scolded for insufficiently sharing his resources. The man must have been in his sixties, and had been struggling with illnesses over the past years. By the time of this study he was severely weakened, and he and his wife approached several folk healers to cure him. Most likely to pay for these expenses, the man sold some of his livestock and later received a sum of money from his son working in South Africa. A grandson living with him complained that despite finding a lot of money by selling the livestock, his grandfather did not buy any nice food for the household. Non-household members grumbled that the man had been sent a lot of money from South Africa, yet had not shared any of it by hiring fellow villagers to help him cultivate his field. When the man eventually got so weak that he could barely lift his hoe and asked a passer-by to assist him, the young man refused, reminding the old man that he had not helped others either when he had some money at his disposal. [P2 0755, 1018, 1127]

The claim to social support also appears from Suset’s expenditure pattern described earlier. When she had some money available, her close kin came to tell her what they lacked, needed, or craved for – subtly pressing her into sharing. As appears from the diaries and our observations, a lot of begging (kupempha7) and sharing takes place between Mudzi villagers [P2 0762, 0895, 1502, 1719, 1801, 1900; P3 1018, 1110, 1324, 1429, 1436, 2595; P8 0071, 0073, 0075]. Having something, be it pumpkins from the field or more than a single dose of paraffin, means facing requests [e.g. P2 0095, 0519, 0737, 0865, 1439, 1446, 1481, 1855, 1881; P3 1476, 1942; P8 0047, 0075]. Villagers who still have maize when others run out are regularly begged for a cup or plate of flour [P2 0583, 0724, 1225, 1229, 1232, 1282, 1446; P3 4066, 4084]. Overall, those who have some tangible wealth can be sure that it will soon vanish as chances are great that someone within their reciprocal network needs a share of it, which cannot be reasonably withheld.

The closer a (kin) relationship between individuals in Mudzi, the greater their moral obligation to share. Such intensification of social obligations between closely related persons has been called ‘condensed morality’ by Pennartz & Niehof (1999: 206), following David Cheal’s theory on the moral economy of the household. Tellingly, when two women or households are close (in the social sense, although it often coincides with spatial vicinity too), this is in Mudzi indicated by the expression that they “often share relish” [“timagayirana ndiwo”] [e.g. P3 2762]. In line with this, when begging for support, the beggar tends to underline her relationship with the begged, emphasizing its closeness or claiming it to be close. For example, in situations in which women hoped to get some form of assistance from the mothers of their ex-partners, these were explicitly addressed as “mother-in-law,” or at least as “grandmother of my child” [P3 1942; P8 0069].

7 The same word is used for praying to God or Allah.
Reviewing the studies then available on social responses to food shortages, Dirks (1980) discerns a universal pattern in which sharing initially increases, but diminishes drastically when actual famine sets in. Based on the studies he reviews, Dirks deduces that when the circle of reciprocal relationships narrows, the nuclear family remains intact longest as a “redistributive, protective unit” (1980: 30). Notably, however, the household or nuclear family is in Mudzi’s daily life reality not the blissful unit of trust, commitment, and solidarity that advocates of the ‘moral economy of the household’ and others often hold it to be. As I have argued in Chapter 5, many Mudzi men and women seem to consider marital unions as pragmatic endeavours for individual progress, despite a discourse on ‘helping each other’. Mutual secrecy about incomes and expenditures is the rule rather than exception, and stealing between husbands and wives is common. It may be argued that this is in line with the ‘un-closeness’ between many Mudzi spouses and therefore not necessarily contradictory to the moral economy assumed to be found in close personal relationships. However, theft by (adult) children of their parents’ properties also seems to frequently occur [e.g. P2 0730-4, 0741, 1009, 1154, 1187, 1204, 1305, 1580, 1639, 1650, 1991; P3 1551, 1731, 1753].8 Within one and the same compound, we saw some members became severely undernourished during the hunger season while others managed to remain relatively fat9 (see also Vaughan 1987: 32). Nonetheless, as just noted, the moral obligation to solidarity is found among closely related persons, and called upon by villagers in want when potentially lucrative.

One particularly effective means through which levelling is enforced, is the widespread fear of witchcraft (Austen 1993, Mitchell 1956). Witches (mfiti) are believed to be evil creatures that hunger for human flesh. To satisfy this hunger they secretly kill humans using magical spells, wait until their victim is buried, and exhume the body from its grave at night to eat its flesh. Magical spells can however also be applied by common people, with herbal or magical medicines purchased from a medicine man or women (sing’anga). These medicines may be applied to disadvantage others or advantage oneself – for example through protection against spells from others, curing ailments, increasing yields, or making someone attracted to you. Scary as mfiti may be, in daily life practice it is mostly these spells from fellow villagers and relatives that are feared. Greater wealth is assumed

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8 We have not heard of any case in which parents, or at least mothers, tried to personally benefit at the expense of their children, but reasons given to take good care of one’s children did reveal political economic considerations. These considerations pertained to the hope that children will in return take good care of their parents, or at least mothers, when these become old [e.g. P3 0784, 1899, 2491].

9 Obviously, this may in some cases have had to do with illnesses rather than nutrition per se, but at least in a few cases we have seen and heard that certain members (e.g. the employed husband and not his wife and children, or the matrilineal grandchildren and not patrilineal children) took or were given significantly more and nicer food.
to arouse envy among fellow villagers [e.g. P3 0785, 3498] and is therefore feared to provoke bewitchment (Van Breugel 2001: 265). Anti-social behaviour, such as refraining from sharing one’s wealth, may invite either accusations of bewitching, or bewitchment by others.10 In Mudzi, suspicions of witchcraft abound [P2 470, 489, 576-8, 869, 1018, 1332, 2116; P3 0405, 0610, 1911, 3497-8, 4009] and fear of bewitchment guides many villagers’ actions [P2 0738-9, 0750, 1706; P3 1190] (see also Bryceson et al. 2004: 37, Launiala & Honka 2011: 404). Villagers who became incurably ill and villagers who died, whether due to a disease or not, were by many assumed to have been bewitched, often as a result of jealousy [P2 0869, 1018, 1332, 2116; P3 0405, 0610, 1911]. “They may have had iron sheets [as roof], or a lot of livestock,” Gertrude explained to me [P3 0405]. One of Mudzi’s wealthier couples described in Chapter 3 had actually fled from their previous home village to Mudzi because of mounting accusations of witchcraft. According to the wife (36), it was again their relative success in producing sufficient maize and cash crops (cotton and peppers) that got them into trouble in Mudzi, as jealous neighbours bewitched her to become severely ill. She indeed grew increasingly thin, developed soars all over her body, lost much of her hair, and gave birth to a baby so weak that I fear for its life [P3 0610, 1064, 1138, 3497-8, 4009]. Because of her weakness and repetitive hospital admissions she has not been able to plant any cash crops this year: her neighbours got what they (presumably) wanted. In this woman’s own and others’ perception, it had been her households’ relative wealth that brought misfortune, ill health, and so an ascendance into poverty.

A further potential disadvantage of possessing material wealth is that this may be taken by others as a justification to exclusion from support. In Mudzi, this social repercussion was most obvious when villagers were to select beneficiaries amongst themselves for participating in an external development project or divide a communally received hand-out – hence when a substantial but limited resource without clear ownership suddenly arrived on the scene. Those unfortunate enough to be doing some form of business11 at that moment were argued to be in less need of support and therefore excluded from benefitting [P2 0878, 1270; P3 0838, 3751, see also P2 1127].

Kima (64) brews liquor whenever she has the money to buy the main ingredients and expects customers to be buying. She lives in a run-down iron-sheeted, brick-walled house that was built by the husband who abandoned her 24 years ago. Kima relates that whenever subsidized

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10 Interestingly, Nombo (2007: 104) found quite the opposite in rural Tanzania, where villagers actually refrained from sharing food because they were afraid of witchcraft accusations in case a receiver would fall ill after eating the gifted food.

11 In the next chapter I will focus in more detail on the (often negative) consequences of women’s independent income generation.
fertilizer coupons or other hand-outs are to be distributed, fellow villagers point out that she has an iron-sheeted house as well as the equipment to generate money, and therefore should not be amongst the ones receiving support. [P3 3751]

During our stay in Mudzi a development organization delivered free chickpeas to be distributed amongst all villagers. That day we met Hamra (58) – who for a short period was trading salt against money or maize. She complained: “I have not received any chickpeas. They [the villagers put in charge of distribution] say I did not receive because I am now selling salt. They are jealous because I have some money through that business, and say that I can just buy everything myself.” [P2 0878]

Having some form of wealth thus potentially blocks women’s access to other sources of support. Notably, however, not all business women were at all times excluded from receiving other forms of support. Nor were, for example, women with access to remittances from South Africa. As we shall see further on, maintaining warm connections with such women may be highly advantageous and therefore rather not risked by withholding support or privileges. Material capital, or obvious access to it, is thus not per se a ground for exclusion, but can be used as an excuse or justification for it. This is especially the case for women with weak social capital, as will be explained in the second half of this chapter.

Notably, the levelling mechanism works two ways: it thwarts villagers from having much more than others, but also from having much less than others (see also Scheper-Hughes & Lock 1998: 361). This latter aspect shows from the public disapproval of laziness – a much heard and feared accusation in Mudzi [P2 0282, 1056, 1144, 1315, 1820; P3 0486, 0497, 0611, 0614, 0729, 1173, 1245, 1326, 1425, 1763, 2340, 2364, 2994-6, 3217-8] – as well as of splurging for personal benefit. Selling non-surplus maize to obtain cash or eating large quantities of nsima, for example, are severely criticized [P2 1334, 1488, 1508, 1639]. If a begging villager can be held responsible for his or her need, for example because of perceived laziness or splurging, this too may be used as justification by others to later withhold support [e.g. P2 1232, 1334, 1508]. It follows from this that while wealth cannot easily be kept, it can neither be used excessively for own consumption – and thus must be shared.

Dealing with ‘push’ factors

The expenditure patterns of Suset and other Mudzi women already revealed some of the ways in which the potentially negative consequences of ‘having’ – the social obligations to share, the risk of bewitchment or accusations of sorcery, and the risk of being excluded from support – are managed. Money is quickly disposed of, and commodities are bought in small, unsharable and inoffensive quantities only (which is, obviously, also related to the tactic of quickly disposing the usually small amounts that come in).

I have already mentioned earlier the seemingly surprising fact that even food-short Mudzi women, when accessing a relatively substantial amount of money (for
example the 1500MK Orphan Care money or a several thousand Kwacha loan from a microfinance institute), tended to spend part of it by hiring fellow villagers to help cultivate their fields [P2 0439, 0505, 1246]. At first sight, spending precious money in times of hunger on hiring labourers for work that one can also do oneself may seem economically irrational. Considering it in light of the described social pressures to share, it proves actually quite sensible, even from an economic point of view. By paying fellow villagers to do some work, the women warded off begging from the hired villagers in particular, as these received a fairly large sum already, and from others in general because the money was out of the women’s hands. Furthermore, they averted feelings of resentment and the possible consequences by showing a commitment to sharing their sudden ‘bulk’ of wealth. Meanwhile, they benefited from their own generosity as it relieved them from performing some hard manual labour.

A further widespread way of minimizing the potentially negative consequences of possession, no matter how small, is to try to hide it – as far as this is possible in a tightly-knit community like Mudzi [e.g. P2 0655, 1090, 1190, 1635, 1637, 1708, 1772; P3 0754, 2055] (see also Fafchamps 1992, Foster 1972, Vaughan 1985). For example, one of the liquor brewing women in Mudzi claimed that men like her place because it is located at some distance from the main road and paths: “Here they can drink alone, without meeting friends for whom they must buy drinks” [P3 1403]. As noted earlier, even spouses often try to hide from each other their (exact) income and expenditures [P2 0645, 1274, 1504, 1526, 1565, 1568, 1582, 1583, 1611, 1635, 1643, 1611, 1736, 1736, 1761, 2024; P3 0941-2, 1903, 3083-95], so as to avoid claims on it and not to arouse suspicion about its source. We know of some cases in which Mudzi women spent the little money they possessed exclusively on snacks at the market, eating them on the spot, returning home empty-handed (but full-stomached) [e.g. P2 1154, 1274]. Explicit questions from fellow villagers about money (and its source) are considered inappropriate [P2 1026], and often either dodged or answered with lies [P2 1026, 1481, 1545, 1717, 1981; P3 0952, 0975, 1134]. In line with these tactics to hide what might arouse envy, those who left for South Africa tended to do so unannounced and as secretly as possible, fearing that someone might make a magical attempt to shatter their money-making plans [P2 1706; P3 1190].

Thus, in anticipation of the various ‘push’ factors, possession of both cash and other goods is generally kept to a minimum, and what is possessed is often

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12 Equivalent to approximately 7.50 Euro at the time of the research.
13 Reconstructing the survival strategies of rural Malawians during the severe famine of 1949, Vaughan (1987: 34) writes that the food that could be found was brought to the household at night so that neighbours would not see it, and eating was done indoors instead of outside as usual.
surrounded with secrecy, especially if it is something that can be shared and thus claimed by others. Such a persistent portrayal of poverty should, however, by no means be taken to suggest that Mudzi villagers prefer not to share. As appears from the above, a substantial part of the wealth that is disposed of is strategically shared to safeguard one’s social position and foster reciprocal relationships. In this way, money, with its potentially negative aspects, is invested in, and so transformed into, social capital. The fact that so much of the little wealth that villagers may get their hands on is directly redistributed among their fellow villagers reveals the high value attached to building and maintaining social capital. In the following part of this chapter I assess the central role of social capital in daily village life.

Social capital

The vital importance of social capital in Mudzi daily life

An important ‘pull’ factor to quickly spend money is its potential to be transformed into social capital. At the beginning of this chapter I defined social capital as ‘the ability of individuals and collective actors to mobilize resources through their network of more or less durable social relations’. Rural Malawians like those in Mudzi have few formal social securities that they can depend on. The Malawi state apparatus lacks the means and often also the political will to deliver to its citizens, particularly those in the rural areas, structural protection against hardship. Health care services are free of charge, but the clinics are understaffed and underequipped (medicines, if available, must be paid for). The police force is stationed far away from Mudzi and officers often lack money for fuel or request forthright bribes to perform their duties [P2 0715–7]. Only one Mudzi villager, an elderly woman, receives a small government pension, for the services performed by her late husband as soldier during World War II. Six households receive a monthly allowance because they take care of one or several orphans [P3 0555, 0923, 1095, 3939, 4057; P8 0015]. In sum, most villagers cannot rely on any formal system of insurance against misfortune. Meanwhile, the likelihood that misfortune will occur at any time in the near future is extremely high in an impoverished, neglected, and famine- and disease-prone environment like Mudzi’s. Informal safety nets are therefore of utmost importance for survival. The combination of an insufficiently equipped health care system with high levels of malnutrition and infectious diseases, for example, leads to

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14 I have discussed here how possession is often kept from the eyes of fellow villagers (although some exposure can be beneficial, as will be argued further on). It is also preferably kept hidden from external development agencies. In surveys that Mudzi villagers assumed to be undertaken to inform upcoming development interventions, or when interacting with outsiders whom they assumed to be in the position to direct handouts, they emphasized and exaggerated their deprivation [P3 0511, 0522, 0552, 0625, 0755, 0799, 0975, 1013, 1152, 1494, 4107; P8 0002].
frequently debilitating episodes of illness. During such a period an ill villager needs others to fetch water, collect firewood, and prepare food. While men can rely on their wives for this, women cannot expect their husbands to perform these female tasks. For this, they generally depend on other women in their household or neighbourhood. When money is required for medical treatment, or eventually a funeral, no household has the money at hand for this, and all thus depend on their social network to gather bits and pieces. In case a household’s maize stores become depleted, its roof collapses, or maybe just lacks matches to make a fire, it often only has the goodwill of others to turn to in order to find support.

A few formally organized social networks exist in Mudzi. Members of the same church or mosque, for example, offer support to each other particularly in case of death. Commonly, food or money is contributed annually after harvest to use for members’ funerals throughout the year, but also is collected at the time a death actually occurs [P2 1707]. During the burial, furthermore, prayers are sung by fellow congregation members. There is also a village-wide funeral club that transcends the religious background of the deceased. Here too members contribute both annually (100MK and some maize after harvest) and upon occasion (20MK). The money may be used to pay for funeral expenses that the bereaved family is unable to cover, for example the (Christian) coffin or the (Islamic) cloth that a corpse must be wrapped in. Male members dig the grave, while women members prepare a hearty meal for the digging men (and themselves).

In the year prior to our fieldwork, several income-generating clubs had been initiated by the Food Income Diversification Program (FIDP), a development program implemented by the Government of Malawi with European Union funding. Of these clubs, only the pig-rearing club was still in operation at the time of my fieldwork. The mushroom-cultivation club had been short-lived because cultivating the moisture-needing crop turned out to be highly unfeasible in a water-deprived area like that of Balaka District. The soybean-growing club dissolved when the treasurer had run off with the proceeds of the club’s first soy sale. Another type of formally organized groups in Mudzi are the networks formed in order to receive a loan from one of the microfinance agencies active in the area. Requiring the formation of such ‘joint liability’ groups is common policy among microfinance institutes throughout the developing world (De la Torre 2010: 19). The group is held communally responsible for timely payback by each of its members – the idea being that this peer pressure enhances the repayment of loans and interest, and the financial sustainability of the institutes. The microfinance institutes active in Mudzi and its surroundings demand an initial payment from each group member before distributing loans, or demand that the group saves contributions at each group meeting. In sum, all these networks are governed by formal and explicit regulations concerning, among other things, the investments that members must make and the benefits they can expect to reap.
Most social networks in Mudzi are, however, of an informal nature, constituting the casual relationships with relatives, neighbours, other fellow villagers, and (ex-)partners and their relatives. They may also include occasional outsiders like Gertrude and me, or field staff from governmental and non-governmental organizations, such as teachers, nurses, and development project implementers. These social contacts are not in themselves social capital. Only when they have been turned into relationships that can be called upon for support, whether human or material, can they be considered as social capital.

Such informal social capital manifests itself in myriad smaller and larger forms of reciprocal support. In Mudzi, these included watching each other’s children; visiting and caring for ill villagers; assisting in preparations for funerals and remembrance ceremonies; sharing relish, maize, money, and utensils; watering a fellow villager’s garden during their absence; assistance in the field or with building a house; offering shelter when one’s house collapsed; writing letters to the illiterate; or granting someone precedence at the water pump, e.g. when a woman left her baby alone in the house. Perhaps less obvious forms of assistance include helping a fellow village woman to find a (good) partner, for example by directing to her men who are searching for a wife, telling positive stories to men about women who want a partner, and giving honest advice to a woman about her proposer. Furthermore, registration to participate in a (profitable) development project often depends on the goodwill of certain gatekeepers in the community, as does being granted *ganyu* and receiving fair and timely payment for such work. More generally, whether a certain occurrence will be explained by others in favour or against the persons involved is likely to be related to their (positive or negative) relationship with these persons. Indeed, all the forms of

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15 For legibility, I have included citations for each of these forms of support in separate footnotes. For watching each other’s children: P2 0110; P2 1383, 1767.
16 P2 1421, 1423, 1491, 1495, 1805, 1810, 1853, 1874, 1890; P3 0758, 1594; P8 0004
17 P2 0071, 0160, 0175, 1435, 1493, 1497–8, 1510, 1512, 1565, 1577, 1707, 1745–6; P3 574, 0751, 1439, 1491, 2600, 2734
18 P2 0283, 1079, 1376, 1439, 1502, 1881; P3 1278, 1598, 1802, 2774; P8 0048
19 P2 0702, 0724, 1229, 1232, 1282, 1410, 1508, 1763; P3 1324, 2595, 4084; P8 0006
20 P2 1185, 1219, 1481, 1690, 2769; P3 3758; P8 0053, 0059
21 P2 1193, 1890; P3 0979, 1487, 1942; P8 0051
22 P2 0098
23 P2 1771, 1848; P3 2420, 2900; P3 2077
24 P2 1127; P3 0608, 1532, 2206
25 P2 1484
26 P3 2414
27 P2 0643, 0906, 1020, 1756; P3 2132, 3893
28 P2 1270; P3 0486, 2054
29 P2 0682, 1093, 1866; P3 1834
30 P2 0178, 1613
support mentioned here can also be withheld in the case of negative social capital. As we shall see further on, for example, few Mudzi villagers attended the funeral of a baby girl in the compound of a woman that they felt was absent too often at the funerals of others [P2 0071]. At another funeral, for the daughter of a young woman infamous for her many sexual partners, no one was willing to pray or sing [P2 1436]. In another example, I related in Chapter 5 how some women told harmful stories to men about the woman they had proposed to in attempt to obstruct the marriage [P2 1756; P3 2495]. In other cases, women who begged for some relish, maize, or money were turned down [P2 1135, 1334, 1965; P3 2331], and ill people were denied the quantity or quality of care they needed [P3 0758, 1744].

**Tactical investments in social capital**

As demonstrated above, goodwill is one aspect of social capital or ‘the ability to mobilize support’, as I have defined it. Such goodwill must be earned and fostered. Showing commitment to sharing one’s wealth – whether by distributing commodities, lending out money, or hiring *ganyu* labourers – is an important way of earning and fostering goodwill. Combined with the previously described risks involved in hoarding money, this helps to explain why money is often quickly out of each villager’s hands and circulated through the community.

Wealth and favours are, however, not distributed at random, simply to get rid of them and attain a general level of community goodwill. Assessing my data on who receives support and who is excluded, especially when shortages become more severe [cf. P2 1690], reveals the tactical dynamics that underlie the sharing of wealth. Lacking sufficient resources to help everyone in need, Mudzi villagers are selective in sharing and tend to invest particularly in relationships that are potentially reciprocal, as shown in the following:

Salika (39, five dependent children, abandoned) called her brother in South Africa and begged him to send her some money to contribute to the remembrance ceremony of the deceased husband of one of her neighbours – a woman much better off than Salika. She explained to her brother why it was so important to contribute: “because if something happens to us she is the one who can help.” [P2 1510]

In Malawi, as noted, community norms prescribe that those who have more must share their wealth, and that those who lack must receive support. Normatively, communal survival is thus privileged over personal development. In daily Mudzi life, however, personal benefits seem to often overrule a sense of normative altruism. Having little to share while desperately needing potential sources of future support urges villagers to carefully distribute their meagre resources in the most cost-effective way. This necessarily means investing in relationships that can most likely be yielded from at a later time.

In Mudzi, these ‘cost-effective’ relationships come in two types, which in the literature on social capital have been called *bonding* and *linking* social capital.
Putnam (2000) describes ‘bonding social capital’ as the social ties within a relatively homogenous group. ‘Linking social capital’ is a term coined by Woolcock (2000) to denote vertical connections between people at different hierarchical levels. For Mudzi villagers such linking social capital entails relationships with people who have relatively good access to resources. These better-off villagers are most likely to be able to reciprocate, although they may not always be willing to because they have little to gain from investing heavily in a reciprocal relationship with a poorer partner. Indeed, the support offered by the better-off Mudzi villagers often comes in the form of *ganyu* opportunities: they allow those in need to work in their field in exchange for money, food, or seeds. The bonding type of social capital in Mudzi consists of more-or-less equal relationships within a small cluster of closely related people, usually kin but in some cases friends, who are generally most willing to reciprocate in whatever way they can, although they often have little to share. Despite the low quantities and low frequencies of resources available, the likeliness of accessing these is relatively high, because each person’s need for future support makes them more responsive to requests for assistance. As Scott (1976: 27) remarked: “the more reliable a [subsistence option], the more resource-poor it tends to be” (italics in original). Investment in such bonding relationships was exemplified by the loyal, consistent giving-and-taking between Suset, her grandmother, and her elder sister that I described earlier.

Each Mudzi villager thus invests in reciprocal relationships with a small circle of close partners, and in relationships with a few people who are well positioned to mobilize resources. Consequently, the villagers who receive most support are not necessarily – and are even unlikely to be – those in most need. As exemplified by the above excerpt about Salika’s motivation to share assets with her better-off neighbour, access to support generates further support; social capital attracts social capital. As Du Toit et al. (2007: 534) conclude from their ethnographic study on social capital in rural South Africa: “to those that have shall more be given” (see also Lundberg et al. 2000 for Tanzania, Pinder 2004 for Malawi). Conversely, those without significant connections are doubly disadvantaged, because 1) they have little livelihood security, which 2) makes them uninteresting (unprofitable)

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31 It is partly in this light that we can understand the warnings from some scholars that social capital may work to the advantage of some while marginalizing others (e.g. Adler & Kwon 2000, Cleaver 2002, Du Toit et al. 2007, Portes 2003).

32 These two women with whom Suset had the closest relationships of mutual support were by her classified as “grandmother” and “elder sister,” but this does not necessarily mean that they were her actual grandmother and sister as understood in Western terms. Her ‘grandmother’ may just as well have been a sister of her real grandmother, and her ‘sister’ may well have been a cousin. No matter their exact affiliation in Western terms, these two women were the people who Suset identified as most closely related to her in local kinship terms; all others had either died or migrated too far to retain regular contact with.
to assist (invest in). In the words of Cole (2010: 58): “poverty both signals and reproduces a lack of significant connection to others.”

Tactical investment in Mudzi is well exemplified by two episodes of illness concerning the children of women situated at the extreme ends of the social capital spectrum:

As long as her adult son was admitted at Balaka hospital, Mudzi’s Group Village Headwoman too resided there to take care of him. On her way to Balaka, she had been escorted by the chief of Mudzi A [P2 1801], and in the weeks following she was visited repeatedly by Mudzi women [P2 1805, 1810, 1874, 1890] – despite the journey of several hours walk. Visitors brought milk and bread for the patient (who himself was not a Mudzi resident) to regain strength [P2 1835; P3 2470]. When Amila – one of the poorest Mudzi women, without affluent connections – stayed at the same hospital to take care of her ill young daughter for some weeks, they were not visited even once. The girl was found in severe need of blood, but Amila had no one to turn to for donation. Eventually the doctor gave his own blood, and the girl survived. When later the girl was discharged, it took a lot of effort for Amila to persuade an uncle living in Balaka to lend her money for a bike taxi to take her still-weakened daughter home [P3 1744, see also P3 3861].

The discrepancy between these two episodes can be interpreted to have various causes, such as a general liking of the Group Village Headwoman and her son, and a dislike of Amila and her daughter. I contend, however, that it has mainly to do with the fact that pleasing the Group Village Headwoman is most likely a rewarding investment, while spending many hours walking and a handful of Kwachas on Amila and her daughter is unlikely to ever result in a materialization of Amila’s gratitude. This is not simply a matter of financial capital, of wealth versus poverty, as no one in Mudzi, not even the Group Village Head, seems able to accumulate much tangible wealth – but rather of social capital, of the potential to pull strings in times of need. The many hospital visits that villagers paid to the son of the Group Village Headwoman exemplify investments in the earlier-described linking type of social capital. The Group Village Headwoman’s traditionally high status as community leader, her blood relations with other traditional leaders in the area, her pivotal role in the allocation of benefits from government or NGO development projects, and her access to financial support from two sons employed in South Africa make her a desired reciprocal partner – even though she cannot be approached for each painkiller that is wanted.

The good (read: reliable or resourceful) connections that social capital consists of are partly a matter of circumstance: whether one has close relatives at all, or even a relative who is placed in a powerful position or who has migrated to South Africa is beyond one’s control (although social pressure can surely help in this last instance, and is certainly employed by some Mudzi women). In this sense, Amila was simply unlucky. Nonetheless, as mentioned, through actively fostering the connections that they do have, and where possible extending their network of potentially reciprocal relationships, women can exert some level of agency in
attempting to increase their social capital and thus their access to support in times of need.

Such investing in social relationships does not necessarily involve money or goods – which are out of reach for women like Amila, but can entail physical assistance too. Attending or assisting at funerals, for example, is an excellent way to actively foster social capital, and seems to be at every villager’s disposal. A closer look, however, reveals the limits to poor women’s agency to singlehandedly expand their support base (see also Cleaver 2002). For one, the time invested in, for example, fetching water and helping to cook for a funeral, cannot be spent on cultivating one’s field, doing ganyu or business, or, as in Agnessi’s case below, attending a training – and thus does come at a cost which not everybody can afford:

Agnessi (42, married) on several occasions chose to continue the tailoring course to which she had been admitted instead of attending the funeral of a fellow villager. When her daughter’s baby died shortly after birth, some Mudzi women refused to pay their condolences, in this way taking revenge for Agnessi’s prioritizing her own development over community solidarity. [P2 0071, see also P3 2743]

Agnessi chose not to be expelled from the (free) tailoring course, but was punished for this by a reduction in community support. Agnessi’s agency to improve her future support base was restricted because either way – investing in social capital at the cost of her education, or investing in education at the cost of her social capital – this support base would be affected. Other, seemingly futile and easily overlooked, factors too can restrict deprived women’s agency to uphold or improve their social support network. For example, attending funerals and other ceremonies requires wearing a reasonably proper outfit. Because of this, Agnessi, often lacking the soap to wash her one set of clothes, at times felt unable to attend [P3 3145], and was thus limited from actively and effectively increasing her social capital by a lack of access to resources.33

Notably, the few women with relatively secure livelihoods, such as those with husbands or sons steadily employed in South Africa, are less pressed to maintain good reciprocal community relations. Their fellow villagers are in greater need of their generosity than the reverse, so they have less to fear – provided that they exhibit a preparedness to share their benefits. As these women are less dependent on public opinion while at the same time reasonably sure of a favourable attitude from fellow villagers anyway, they have somewhat more space to manoeuvre and act as they please. I return to this point further on.

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33 The downward spiral that women like Amila get caught up in can be halted or reversed, whether in the short or long term, for example by a son who grows up and finds employment at one of the large estates in the area [P2 1634], or selection by the village chief to participate in a development project as a token poor person, to demonstrate commitment to channel aid to the poorest of the poor as instructed by the development agencies [P3 0687, 4097].
Those who need reciprocal relationships the most are by default those who have little to share – the majority of Mudzi villagers. They must make sure therefore, as argued earlier, that those few meagre resources that they can dispose of are distributed in the most cost-effective way. They must furthermore make sure that they do not accentuate their shortage of and need for reciprocal relationships, as this would make them unattractive reciprocal partners and diminish their potential access to future support. In this light the aversion that some Mudzi women expressed against doing *ganyu* and working at a commercial estate can be understood: these are considered outright signs of lacking other sources of support (unlike selling of crops, starting a business, or working in town or even abroad, which signal that a woman has investment capital at her disposal). “People may think that you are very poor,” one woman argued – in other words, fellow villagers may deem you unable to reciprocate and withhold support where possible [see also P3 0934].

The data discussed in this section demonstrate that social capital determines whether one is to be reckoned with in daily village life interactions, which in turn determines whether one can access the support one needs at the moment it is needed. While showing off material possession goes against community morals and can therefore be detrimental to one’s social status, health, and even life, displaying one’s connectedness attains quite the opposite. This may explain why, for example, some Mudzi women bragged to others that I – a presumably affluent and well-connected outsider, and thus potential linking social capital – was privileging them with gifts and money, even though this was not the case [P2 1227; P3 1182, 1244, 2485–7, 2884]. It probably also helps to explain why, despite the levelling mechanism, some women boasted fake long braids in their hair, a cellular phone, some furniture in their house, or corrugated roofing on their house. According to Parker Shipton, such wealth could be highly problematic because of “the potential for complaints and damaging accusations that underlies every saving or investment decision” (Shipton 1990: 367). My data seem to indicate, however, that showing off some level of ‘access to resources’ is actually beneficial to livelihood security.

Thus, to optimize their livelihood security Mudzi women must carefully balance a portrayal of poverty with an image of powerful connectedness. By doing so they minimize the risks that arise from possessing tangible wealth while maximizing the quantity and quality of potential future support sources. Sofia (25) described this dual strategy well when she once casually remarked that “those who are rich pretend to be poor, while those who are poor pretend to be rich” [P3 1937].

Notably, as we have seen in cases of HIV- and AIDS-affected community members, a language of culpability may be employed by villagers to exempt

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34 This will be further elaborated upon in the next chapter on women’s income-generating options.
themselves from the social obligation to help those in need. If, for example, a fellow villager’s need can be argued to stem from laziness – a much-heard accusation in Mudzi [P2 0282, 1056, 1144, 1315, 1820; P3 0486, 0497, 0611, 0614, 0729, 1173, 1245, 1326, 1425, 1763, 2340, 2364, 2994–6, 3217–8], or from a ‘misuse’ of maize such as selling or excessive consumption [P2 1232, 1334, 1488, 1508, 1639], this may be used to justify a withholding of support. Logically then, such accusations are feared and where possible averted, particularly by those who most depend on the potential support of their social network. In the next chapter I return to this point.

Sexual ties as social capital
In the previous sections I have argued that the ability to pull strings when necessary is by far the most important (and feasible) asset for Mudzi villagers. The severe insecurity of their livelihoods makes it crucially important to create and continuously foster potential sources of future support. At any moment something may occur that triggers a further descent into poverty – unless one has set up a number of potential safety nets beforehand, of which at least one will function as hoped at the time of need. Obviously, the more potential safety nets a villager can set up, the greater the chance that at least one or preferably several can indeed be called upon when necessary. Forming sexual partnerships with men is one important way for women to set up such social safety nets.

Sexual relationships are a type of exchange relationship on their own and can fall both under the bonding and linking categories identified earlier. Several characteristics make sexual relationships particularly different from non-sexual exchange relationships. One is arguably that women can reciprocate the support they get from their partner not with money or commodities, but with a resource that they have freely available in limitless quantities, namely sex. Sex is, however, not really costless or limitless – as it may come at the cost of an unwanted pregnancy or STI; cannot be offered during times tabooed for sexual intercourse, for example when menstruating or in the months after childbirth, abortion, or miscarriage; and cannot be liberally distributed among endless numbers of men without social repercussions, particularly when married. Nonetheless, despite these potential costs and limitations, sexual intercourse can be a quick and easy way to access money, food, or other commodities – among others because there need not have been established a priori a long-term relationship of mutual reciprocity. The direct need or desire for what a man ought to give in a sexual relationship, even if this relationship entails just a one-time encounter, may compel a woman to discard the potential future costs of the sex act. Although some Mudzi women may at some times have engaged in such ad-hoc, one-time sex encounters [P2 0101, 1546, 1844], most partnerships lasted longer and so functioned as source of social capital, a source of potential future support in times of need.
The central role of social capital in survival among resource-poor populations has, as mentioned, been described many times, yet is often overlooked in the contemporary scholarly discourse on transactional sex. Only some scholars take into account the more general, long-term need of ‘being connected’ as motive for involvement in transactional sexual liaisons, among whom are Thornton (2009) and Swidler & Watkins (2007). Thornton theorizes that sexual networking, discredited in the public health arena as highly irrational amidst an AIDS epidemic, may be very rational if considered a means to create social capital and so improve many other aspects of an individual’s life (2009: 3). This concurs with the data from Mudzi that I assess in this section. Interestingly, he hypothesizes that having unprotected sex may be the ultimate means to consolidate a relationship, because it generates an impression of mutual trust and seriousness. Although I have no data to support this assumption, it may help to explain, in combination with the high value attached to social capital as described in this chapter, the continued high occurrence of unprotected sex in Mudzi and beyond. Swidler & Watkins (2007) build their argument on an extensive set of qualitative data from rural Malawi and argue that poor women’s sexual relationships should be considered a form of insurance against future hardship in line with the patron-client ties commonly observed throughout Africa (see Van den Borne 2005a: 105 for a similar argument about women in urban Malawi). They conclude that it is the high probability of future need for support rather than acute deprivation that leads women to engage in transactional relationships. This argument corresponds with my findings described in Chapter 5 concerning the indefinite character of many sexual relationships and the lasting support from ex-partners. The bonds that are created by engaging in a sexual relationship can often still be called upon on later occasions – which contributes to their indefinite (and infinite) character. Their argument also corresponds with the vital importance of ‘being connected’ as described in this chapter.

Swidler & Watkins (2007) describe the men that engage in transactional relationships as relatively affluent men who feel morally obliged or socially ‘forced’ to share their wealth by providing for multiple women through sexual relationships with them. These men benefit from amassing female ‘clients’ because it strengthens their position as patron. In Mudzi, however, there were few relatively affluent men (and those who were seemed loyal to their long-time wives, which may be one of the very reasons for their relative prosperity, as explained in Chapter 3). Most women were sexually involved with men roughly as poor as themselves. Many of the relationships seemed more-or-less reciprocal: both partners begged and shared, gave and took. There are, in other words, no clear patron or client roles discernible. Men depend on women for a roof over their head and nsima on their plate, and women want men for additional labour power or material extras, a respectable status, and continuation of their lineage.
For an average poor man, as I have argued earlier, maintaining relationships with several women is a kind of risk management, whether deliberate or not. As detailed in Chapter 5, divorce is a highly common occurrence in Mudzi and instigated by women about as often as by men. Irrespective of which partner wants to divorce, it is the man who must leave the house, the field, and its produce. To counter this insecurity he must nurture substitute ties, whether openly or secretly, actively or passively, sexually or (still) platonically, to fall back on in case he suddenly finds himself without a home and someone to care for him. It is in this light that the often erratic but ongoing support from male ex-partners can be explained – as attempts to keep available as many refuges as possible.

As described in earlier chapters, the support that women can beg from relatives and fellow villagers is limited, because day-to-day provision is considered to be foremost a husband’s task (see also Vaughan 1987: 32). Consequently, an unmarried woman in need of support is expected to pursue marriage rather than exclusively depend on her (non-sexual) social network. Cultivating at least one sexual relationship thus strengthens a woman’s access to potential support – both through her partner as well as the wider community. Maintaining ties with multiple current, ex-, and potential future sexual partners increases a woman’s number of safety nets, as also argued by Swidler & Watkins. Ties with well-positioned men especially strengthen a woman’s social capital, as her reciprocal capacities are then considered strong and thus sought after by the wider community.

Furthermore, because of the cultural norm that men must provide for their wife or chibwenzi, sexual relationships with men are more ‘demandable’ than, say, a reciprocal relationship with a neighbour. A woman can more explicitly and more forcefully claim the support she desires or requires from a sexual partner than from any other social relation [e.g. P2 0095, 0776, 1252; P3 2138], especially if she has his children to care for as well [e.g. P2 0924; P3 1103, 2297]. Not surprisingly, considering men’s perceived duty to provide for their partner, a recent study quantifying cash transfers within a Malawian village community found that the cash transferred from men to women totalled well over double the amount that was transferred between men or between women, and over four times the amount transferred from women to men (Stuart et al. 2011: 2).

There is, however, as discussed in Chapter 5, a limit to the number of sexual safety nets that a woman can employ without damaging her respectable status and community’s goodwill, which would lead to a decline in her ‘total sum’ of social capital. Indeed, numerous Mudzi women said they refrained from divorcing quickly because exchanging partners too frequently would diminish the community’s respect for them. The exact trade-off point differs per woman and situation. If the support that can be derived through sexual relationships is particularly good, which seemed the case for some of Mudzi’s young, pretty women, this form of social capital may be privileged over and at the expense of other forms of social
relationships. Venesi (35) also is an exceptional example, whose case gives an interesting insight into the possible consequences of the female empowerment that some development professionals believe may reduce women’s involvement in risky sexual relationships:

Of all Mudzi villagers, it is probably Venesi who best understands how to play the game of accessing external development aid. By neatly showing up on time, and performing all tasks exactly as instructed, she made a good impression on the field officer of Concern Universal (the development institute most active in Mudzi), and was selected by him for subsequent development activities too. Each time she was selected, Venesi made sure to share some of the benefits that she accessed through the project with Mudzi’s chief, because this woman also had a part in the selection process. Furthermore, when taking out a microloan from Concern Universal (CU), Venesi was one of the few women who actually invested most of it in a business – as intended by the institute – and always managed to pay back the loan and interest in time. Her rapport with CU’s field officer became so good that he eventually appointed her as ‘volunteer teacher’ for the adult literacy project. Venesi receives a monthly allowance of 1000MK for this task, as well as regular training. When attending such workshops, she receives a travel allowance, lunch allowance, attendance allowance, and, if the workshop lasts several days, an overnight allowance. She saves most of this money by walking to Balaka instead of hiring a bike-taxi, eating some bananas instead of lunch in a restaurant, and returning home in the evenings instead of staying in a hotel in town. When the literacy classes had long ceased due to lack of interest from the (largely literate) Mudzi villagers, Venesi continued to be paid by CU’s field officer (who was aware that the classes had stopped, and probably well understood the lack of interest yet preferred not to inform his superiors about the failure of a project under his command). Venesi carried on attending the various workshops without disclosing that the project was no longer being implemented in Mudzi. Besides this regular and substantial source of income, Venesi has both a brother and a son working in South Africa who send her gifts such as a mobile phone. In sum, Venesi’s livelihood is fairly well secured, which makes her less dependent on the goodwill and potential support offered by the Mudzi community than most of her fellow village women. At the same time, the community is generally well disposed towards her anyway, because of her relatively substantial access to resources and good connections with migrants in South Africa, the village chief, and the development and microfinance institutes’ staff. On a few occasions women whispered to us that all of Venesi’s five children have different fathers, which I saw confirmed in the village birth register. According to the gossips, Venesi had cheated on each man with her next lover. The gossip clearly did not bother Venesi, who during our stay dismissed yet another partner, arguing that although he worked in her field, he refused to perform ganyu as she requested to find money for her household. Soon after, she freely walked around with her new lover, a married man from the nearby trading centre. Everybody could see him come and go in broad daylight. Although her behaviour was commented upon and at times laughed about, it was never harshly disapproved of as it was in cases of some other women. [P2 0752, 1058, 1163, 1288; P3 1221, 1870, 2054, 2737; P8 0041]

The trade-off point for Venesi is apparently very high, because of her diversified access to reliable sources of support, which assured her of the community’s general goodwill. As she has managed to capitalize on non-sexual relationships with well-positioned men and women, she gained some leeway to behave as she pleases. Most other women, rather, must carefully balance the potential benefits from sexual relationships with those of a respectable status. As has been elaborated in Chapter 5 they tend to do so by commanding a discourse of urgent need for direct support
to justify their acceptance of sexual proposals and maintain a level of community goodwill.

Discussion and conclusion

In his famous article on “The anatomy of envy” (1972), George Foster posits that there are four universal ways in which all people, from societies rich and poor, try to avoid the negative consequences of envy from others. These four strategies, he emphasizes, are structured in a hierarchical order of preference (*ibid*: 175). The first choice of all who fear being envied would be to conceal the object of potential envy. When this seems impossible or inappropriate, the alternative is to deny that there is much to be envied about it. When this too appears inadequate, some of the desired object is symbolically shared, for example in the case of tipping a waiter to ‘buy off’ any envy that he may feel about his customer’s wealth. According to Foster’s theory it is only in the last instance, when all other options fail to sufficiently ward off the threat of envy, that people resort to actual sharing.

In Mudzi, as we have seen, concealment is indeed a widely applied tactic to avoid claims, envy, and the related risk of bewitchment. Sharing, however, is not a last resort, applied only when other tactics fail or appear unfeasible. Sharing is, within limits, desired, because it is an important means to safeguard one’s access to potential sources of future support, to maintain one’s social safety network, and to show off – in a sense – one’s credibility as a reciprocal partner. Not only fear of repercussions pushes villagers to share, but also hope for rewards (see also Colson 1974: 46, quoted in Lemarchand 1989: 40).

Throughout the past decennia social scientists have hotly debated the motivations underlying this ‘levelling mechanism’, which is found among so many poor population groups. Here, I focus on this discussion specifically in the African context, rather than include feudal Europe and Asia (where the debate originated with James Scott’s 1976 classic *The moral economy of the peasant*). I do so because it has been argued that the case of the African peasantry is unique due to a relative absence of exploitation by elite classes (Caldwell et al. 1989: 188, Hyden 1986: 679). The debate on the levelling mechanism among scholars of Africa polarized into one camp upholding a romantic idea of supportive community networks geared towards the survival of all members (Geertz 1963, Hyden 1980, Kimambo et al. 2008) and an opposite camp insisting that all human behaviour ultimately derives from a self-interested striving for personal improvement (Bates 1983, Fafchamps 1992, Popkin 1979). What seems to have often been overlooked in this ‘moral versus opportunistic peasant’ debate is the fact that abiding by moral community norms of sharing may in fact be an important means to achieve personal benefit. In other words, as also argued by Cheal (1989) and Lemarchand (1989), a moral economy and political economy may be at play simultaneously. Cultural norms
guide villagers’ behaviour by pressuring them into sharing, but exactly how they share is to a great extent directed by tactical considerations aimed at individual survival. It can be said that villagers’ decision making is guided by a form of individual profit maximization. However, the ‘profit at stake concerns reducing one’s livelihood insecurity instead of accumulating personal wealth.

Material wealth has an ambiguous status in daily Mudzi life. Hoarding goes against cultural norms, and is likely to trigger disapproval as well as jealousies, and so threaten one’s personal wellbeing, as also argued by Foster. At the same time, however, material wealth entices reciprocal relationships – which can function as insurance against future despair. To overcome this inherent tension in accumulating material capital, villagers rather strive to accumulate social capital, which allows them to mobilize the necessary material capital (and other forms of support) when needed. Ideally, social capital exists in the form of both reliable (generally horizontal) and resourceful (generally vertical) reciprocal relationships. The former concern relationships with persons equally little endowed but generally highly willing to provide support when necessary, because they are equally in need of potential future reciprocity. The latter entail relationships with people better endowed but who are therefore less interested in actually providing support. As argued in this chapter, strong social capital generates further access to support, because it increases one’s potential capacity to reciprocate and thus others’ willingness to provide assistance or grant privileges. Conversely, a lack of social capital puts one last in line when fellow villagers decide how to best allocate the scarce and meagre assets that they have at their disposal, whether these entail material support or other favours such as inclusion in a profitable development project.

Livelihood security in Mudzi thus largely depends on the size and quality of one’s social network, one’s potential access to resources when in need, and one’s ability to pull strings when necessary. In such an environment, ‘economic independence’, as promoted by many development professionals, is a sheer fallacy and pursuing it could actually be detrimental to the villagers’ feeble livelihood security. As argued throughout, investments to instead expand and strengthen one’s social network are both more feasible and most likely more effective for improving livelihood security. Sexual relationships are pre-eminently suited as source of support because of the cultural expectation that a husband and wife ‘are together to help each other’. This conceptualization also characterizes casual sexual relationships, in which a woman can expect and even actively claim assistance from her partner, whether now or in the future. Having a partner furthermore increases a woman’s potential access to wider community support, as described in Chapter 5. Involvement in sexual relationships with men (if not overdone) is thus a major means for women to increase not only the quantity but also the quality of their social network and so enhance their potential access to support when in need.
Maintaining multiple potential sources of future support is so crucial for livelihood security, and sexual ties are so vital a part of this, that it is unlikely that Mudzi women will easily give up their relationships with (multiple) men. The long-term social capital that is found through sexual ties cannot simply be replaced by one single source of income generation, let alone by something as delusionary (within the Mudzi context) like ‘economic independence’, as suggested by some advocates of the transactional sex paradigm. In the following chapter I elaborate further on misconceptions about the perceived solution of providing poor rural women with income-generating options.
Decent wives and dirty money: Women’s independent income

Introduction

The transactional sex paradigm that is critically assessed in this study builds on the assumption that poor women are forced to exchange sex for male support because they lack alternative means to generate an income. This ‘survival sex’ is considered a main driver of the AIDS pandemic in sub-Saharan Africa. Consequently, it is argued that, to halt further spreading of HIV, female poverty must be urgently addressed so as to reduce their dependence on sexual relationships with men. In previous chapters I have looked at various aspects of the hypothesis that women will make safer sexual choices if they can access money independently from men. In this last ethnographic chapter I assess the presumed lack of options for women to obtain income, and the feasibility of improving women’s livelihood security through independent money making. As we move towards the end of this book, the analyses of the hypothesis’s various aspects increasingly come together. This last chapter is comparatively short, as several issues relevant to its analysis have already been described and discussed earlier.

Time and again Mudzi women emphasized, to me and to each other, their need for male support. Nonetheless, when I asked how they had survived periods without a husband, most shrugged their shoulders and said in a matter-of-fact way that

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they had just worked hard in the field, and did *ganyu* (piecework) when in need of money [e.g. P3 0519, 0523, 1603, 3786, 3801, 3902, 3923, 3996]. Furthermore, during our stay in Mudzi, we saw many women take up small-scale business activities to make ends meet. Apparently, women are quite capable of obtaining money through other means than sexual relationships with men.2

This chapter begins with a description of the various ways through which Mudzi women (could) manage to get money independent of men. I subdivide these ways into means to access money and means to make money. Under the former, I include selling crops and retrieving money through one’s social network or through external development schemes, and under the latter, I include business and wage labour; *ganyu* is somewhere inbetween social networking and wage labour. Although it may be debated whether the distinction between ‘access’ and ‘making’ is apt for these categories in general terms, I would argue that this distinction is relevant for the Mudzi case. Its relevance appears from the fact that the means I have grouped under ‘accessing money’ are less stigmatized for women than those under the category of ‘making money’. In the second half of this chapter, I elaborate further upon the ambivalence towards women’s independent money making. Overall, the analyses in this chapter help to clarify the choices that Mudzi women make between getting resources through relationships with men and through other means.

Women’s income options

Despite women’s insistence that it is men who must provide them with money, there are various means through which Mudzi women can acquire money too – independently of their sexual partner(s). As noted, women can access money through selling their crops, participating in microcredit schemes or other forms of development aid, and receiving or begging support from relatives or fellow villagers. They can furthermore hire out their labour to other farmers, and make money by enrolling in waged employment, or engaging in a small-scale business. The advantage of obtaining money through their own means, women feel, is that they can buy what they want at any moment they want, without having to beg a husband and waiting to see whether and when he will comply [P3 0544, 0743, 0780, 1277, 2416]. However, an independent income for women often comes at a cost, as will be described in this chapter. In the following, I explore the potential of each of the options for women to acquire an independent income, but also the difficulties, disadvantages, and social consequences involved in this.

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2 It is important to recall here that in Mudzi (and much of Africa – see Chapter 5) women and men are in control over the money that they make themselves. Whereas elsewhere women’s incomes are often found to be indirectly controlled by husbands, which may work as a disincentive for women to generate money, this is not the case for the Mudzi women concerned.
Accessing money

- Selling crops

Just after harvest, when the granaries are well stocked, women can easily acquire money by selling or exchanging some produce from their fields [P2 0279, 1680; P3 1630]. During this time, many sell small quantities of maize almost on a daily basis to buy other types of food, soap, salt, oil, paraffin, painkillers, household utensils, clothes, or beauty products; or pay for services like the maize mill or transport [P2 1088, 1565, 1572, 1583, 1590, 1665–6, 1689, 1736, 1777, 1818; P3 1630, 2226, 4075, 4088]. Other food crops, like groundnuts or sweet potatoes, are also grown first for home consumption, but also used to access money when desired or required. Livestock like goats and chickens are kept by relatively better-off villagers, and sold sporadically – as their numbers are limited – when needing a relatively large sum of money, particularly to buy fertilizer [P2 0342, 0719, 1103, 1444, 2128; P3 1021, 1091, 1124]. The crops or livestock may be sold to the few fellow villagers who (temporarily) have some cash, for example obtained through waged employment or remittances from South Africa. These local buyers either consume what they bought right away, add it to their own stock for later consumption, or store it to sell when scarcity returns and prices rocket. Crops can also be sold to middlemen for commercial buyers who pass through the villages looking for merchandise, or have a seasonal stand in one of the nearby trading centres. Larger livestock may be sold to butchers who either make rounds through the area or are sought out by the sellers.

Even before harvest, men and women anticipate their coming prosperity by taking out loans that are to be repaid with maize after harvest [P2 1216, 1358, 1488, 1500, 1601, 1612, 1626, 1777; P3 2588]. This is publicly regarded as foolish because of the low rates offered: during our fieldwork period, borrowers received only 1000MK for a 50kg bag of maize, which was worth up to 4000MK some months earlier and later [e.g. P2 1392, 1623, 1855; P3 1553, 1630, 1742, 1764, 2030]. Yet, few villagers managed to resist the temptation to acquire some ready cash in this way during the hunger season.

During the harvest season, food prices are at a minimum as the supply is high and demand low. Nonetheless, despite their meagre yields and the low prices offered, most Mudzi villagers engage in such selling of non-surplus food crops (see Shipton 1990: 367 on the commonality of this throughout Africa, contrary to the general economic assumption that farmers only sell their surplus crops). Several ridiculed their own habit of squandering the maize they had longed for, paid dearly for and worked hard for during the hunger months before harvest. Now they were eating full plates of nsima three times a day, and selling it for low prices to buy ‘mere luxuries’ like fish, meat, and clothes [P2 0651, 1079, 1274, 1623, 1855; P3 0651, 1079, 1274, 1623, 1855; P3 1216, 1258, 1358, 1488, 1500, 1601, 1612, 1626, 1777; P3 2588].

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3 At the time of the research, 1000MK equaled approximately 5 Euro and 4000MK thus approximately 20 Euro.
Only those who harvested very little – two or three bags of maize [P2 1611, 1965, 2104, 2182; P3 1817, 4057], and those few who harvested plenty – twenty to forty bags [e.g. P3 4050], respectively kept their precious gold for home consumption or for sale when maize prices rocket again due to scarcity.

Whether a conscious strategy or not, by the selling and lavishing of non-surplus maize Mudzi villagers avoid loss due to pests and theft, and the covert selling of maize by other household members [P2 0730–4, 0741]. Furthermore, those who still have maize when others run out have to share, while those who run out of maize when others still have it are entitled to handouts (see Chapter 7). Besides these possible pragmatic, economizing rationales, the desire to splurge after a period of scarcity and hardship may well be considered a universal human trait that must be empathized with [P3 1892]. Uncertain of what the next day might bring, villagers seemed to prefer enjoying what they had at the moment they had it.

It has been noted several times throughout this book that women in a relationship often try to keep their selling of food crops hidden from their partner. More generally too, the selling of crops, although practiced widely, is preferably kept from the public eye. Villagers fear that their selling may provide others with a justification to deny them food aid when their stores run out. As Rosemary (49) explained when she offered some maize for sale to Gertrude:

> “I want to buy soap and salt, that’s why I have decided to sell some maize. I will come at midnight and put it in your kitchen. I am afraid to bring it right now because if my [adult] children see that I am selling maize, they will not give me food in hunger season.” [P2 1508, see also P2 1639]

Rosemary’s fear is not without grounds. As described earlier, both selling and the perceived squandering of maize by excessive consumption were mentioned by Mudzi villagers as reasons for not giving in to requests from hungry fellow villagers to share some maize with them in times of need [P2 1232, 1334, 1488, 1508, 1639].

In sum, selling food crops is an easy and widely practiced means to obtain regular, small quantities of money to satisfy daily household needs. Accessing money in this way does, however, speed up the depletion of the – often already insufficient – household stores. Furthermore, overdoing it may later be punished by fellow villagers who withhold food aid, claiming that the beggar self-inflicted his or her need.

Selling cotton – the one crop that is grown exclusively for income generation⁴ – seems not to be surrounded with such ambivalence. At least, we have not heard any

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⁴ During pre-colonial times, men and women had developed the skills to weave cotton into cloth. At colonization, manufactured products including clothes penetrated the rural areas of Malawi, and eradicated local industries (Mandala 1982: 30). By now, the knowledge of cotton processing seems completely forgotten, as revealed by one Mudzi woman (57) who had been growing cotton for years yet asked me what it is actually used for [P3 2629].
comment indicating social disapproval of dedicating land to cotton production at the expense of food cultivation. Several villagers explained to us that they planned to use their cotton revenue to buy maize when at its cheapest, and add it to their own stores. They expected to so accumulate a larger store than by growing only maize themselves. In this sense, indeed cotton production deserves no disapproval. In practice, however, the cotton revenues were generally spent on many other things than additional maize (see Chapter 7). As the time to harvest and sell the cotton came close, villagers could not stop dreaming about what they would to do with all the money that they were about to receive [P3 2142, 2271, 2620, 2621]. The sudden possession of wealth – right after months of shortages – turned out to be too tempting for most to spend it (wisely but boringly) on maize, of which they had sufficient for the time being.

Although hardly used to actually supplement the meagre maize yields, part of the cotton revenue was spent on useful necessities such as clothes or iron sheets. But whatever it was spent on, the money was spent quickly. The fact that it comes in a relatively large, one-time amount, necessitates such quick spending, for reasons discussed in Chapter 7. In sum, cotton is a feasible and unsuspicious means for women to obtain money, but the income that they can get through it, although quite substantial, does not last them long.

• External development aid
Several development projects had been and were being implemented in Mudzi before and during our fieldwork. As a peaceful but extremely poor country, Malawi receives relatively large quantities of international development assistance. In 2010 this totalled USD 924 million, which amounts to over 85 percent of the country’s gross capital formation, and almost a quarter of the country’s gross national income (World Bank 2012). The main development projects that were implemented in Mudzi at the time of this study included female literacy classes, a tree nursery, making clay ovens to save fuel, and income diversification through growing soy and mushrooms and rearing pigs and goats. Some of the activities were initiated

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5 These iron sheets were bought by a woman (37, abandoned, one child) who had already spent part of her cotton revenue on buying a few iron sheets for some years in a row. The last ones necessary to replace her grass roof were bought during our presence in Mudzi. With next year’s revenue this woman plans to buy nails, and hire someone to put the sheets in place. Such long-term vision was extremely rare in Mudzi. Intriguingly, this particular woman is the only one we are sure is HIV-positive. Several interesting hypotheses can be deduced from this case. Maybe the fact that her HIV status was a public secret led this woman to believe that she could no longer hope for the support of a husband, which made her decide to invest her own money. Or maybe she felt exempted from the potential social scorn that this display of money might trigger, as no one would assume that she got it through a sexual partner or be so mean to bring about further misfortune on her through bewitchment. Maybe she wanted to ‘defeat’ death by openly taking on this long-term vision. It is also possible, of course, that there was no connection between her HIV-status and her actions, which may have rather stemmed from her particular personality.
and implemented through a government program, others by an international non-governmental organization (NGO).

Both institutes claimed that their projects were ‘participant owned’ and the result of demonstrated interest by the local population [P3 0317, 2424, 2432]. In practice, however, Mudzi villagers saw little benefit in the development activities offered [e.g. P2 0285; P3 0497, 3081–2, 3211, 3301, 4041; P8 0003, 0005, 0009, 0012]. Most women were already literate; deforestation was not (yet) experienced as problematic; clay ovens were left unused; and the moisture-needing mushrooms were soon found unfit in a setting where water supply is problematic. The goat-rearing project was the only intervention that was highly valued by almost all villagers, as each household had received its own goat [P2 1490; P3 0333, 1021, 2051; P8 0010].

It seems that, overall, Mudzi villagers have grown accustomed to external development programs failing to deliver on their promises. After being consulted about their most pressing problems (water supply and food insecurity) by the NGO, the villagers found that these were not addressed by the projects that followed [P3 2277]. The villagers made bricks to build a shed for their goats as they were told to do by the program staff, who then did not supply the promised cement and iron sheets [P3 2103, 2551]. During our stay in Mudzi on three occasions survey teams from different institutes dropped by the village to interview randomly selected men and women [P2 0191–0269, 1749; P3 2529]. The interviewees did not see anything in return for their time and answers. An agricultural research institute wanted farmers to test and spread their improved groundnut seeds, so the assigned farmers prepared their fields. But the seeds were delivered far after the right time to plant. The institute left the farmers with instructions yet never came to monitor as they had promised [P2 1859; P3 1255, 2607]. A microcredit scheme had groups of interested women meet for weeks in a row, but the organization’s representative each time told them that there were problems with the computer in their office so the requested credits could not yet be dispensed. Meanwhile this man did take the small amounts of savings money that the women were to bring in each week. After many weeks the women gave up and only made some timid, futile attempts to get their savings back [P2 0504, 583, 666, 1266; P3 1812].

Despite the perceived irrelevance of most projects, Mudzi women generally participated in the activities offered – albeit halfheartedly at best. Moreover, as soon as rumours spread about a possible upcoming project, villagers lined up to have themselves ‘registered’ – indifferent about what the specific project entails [P2 0112; P3 0552, 0556, 3211, 4033]. They did so partly to assure that they would not miss any benefits that might result from it. Resources accessed through external development aid range from the bottle of Coke distributed during a meeting [P3 0599] or the pencil and notebook handed out at the onset of an adult literacy training [P3 0497], or, in rarer cases, to relatively substantial assets like a goat, or significant amounts of money paid for physical labour to clear the roads [P2 0101], plant trees [P2
or teach fellow villagers about topics considered important by development professionals [P2 0105; P3 0522, 1870, 1930, 2366, 4031]. Any handout, no matter how small, is appreciated, and making sure to be included amongst the beneficiaries of a project forms an important means for women (and unemployed men) to access support [e.g. P3 1120, 2054].

Rosemary (49) explains that she attends the weekly tree-nursery meetings in which villagers are taught to grow trees, as well as the adult literacy classes every weekday afternoon. She does not see the benefit of either project, as trees can be found everywhere, and she has known how to read and write since primary school. Some villagers speculated, however, that those participating in the tree-planting project would in the end receive a bag of maize, and those involved in the literacy classes would later on be offered a microloan. Rosemary says she doesn’t actually believe that this is true, but unwilling to run the risk of missing out in case it is true, she shows up at each meeting. [P3 0497]

Many women expressed similar arguments for participating in the various project activities offered in Mudzi [P2 0105; P3 0497, 0512, 0524, 4035, 4044; P8 0009]. Others said that they just followed the orders from the Group Village Headwoman, who had assigned them to participate in specific project activities [P3 0360, 0512; P8 0005, 0006, 0011].

Development agencies often appoint Village Heads to act as intermediaries – rightly acknowledging that chiefs know best who within their community most needs support, but wrongly assuming that the support will indeed be transferred to those most in need. As can be expected following the analysis of social capital in the previous chapter, Mudzi villagers, including the (only slightly better-off) chiefs, have good reason to allocate the assets and resources they can dispose of in the most profitable way.

During our research period the Malawi government re-established a relatively well-paid cash-for-work program to assist the rural poor during the hunger season. The handful of beneficiaries that could participate per village were to clear away the bushes which during the rainy season had partly overgrown the roads in their area. Mudzi’s Group Village Headwoman strategically appointed her orphaned adolescent grandson of whom she was to take care and who could as such generate his own income for the time being, as well as her brother and one of the better off women whose son works in South Africa and regularly sends home money – hence a valuable villager to keep befriended. Lastly, she enlisted herself (although she did not actually perform the labour required). [P2 0081, see also P2 0343, 0904; P3 0402, 0612, 0764, 1202, 1257, 2549, 3236, 4061]

Because of their privileged position to access and allocate development support, the incentive to please development agents is particularly strong for community leaders. This may explain the Group Village Headwoman’s ordering of her people to participate in the various project activities despite the overall low value to her villagers. The few women who refused to participate in any of the project activities (fed up with the often-unfulfilled promises of external development projects) were later excluded by the Group Village Head from receiving the much-needed subsidized fertilizer [P3 0486, 0879, 1061, see also P2 0856; P3 1019]. Justifying this
decision, the Group Village Headwoman argued that by not participating in the projects these women had shown they were uninterested in developing themselves and their households. Surely they would not be planning to apply fertilizer either, she rationalized, and thus did not need a precious coupon. While implicit, the punishment was clear to everyone. Neglecting to participate not only gives the authorities grounds to exclude an unruly villager from support, other villagers too may take his or her ‘laziness’ as justification for withholding community assistance – as described in the previous chapter on social capital. Thus, even if projects themselves do not bring any direct benefit, indirectly they are an important means to safeguard access to resources.

It follows from the above that being in the chief’s favour is an important requirement for villagers to access (any but particularly the most beneficial) privileges and handouts distributed via him or her [P2 0856; P3 1019, 3795; P8 0041]. Through obedience and gifting to their chief, Mudzi women aim to become favoured [P3 0676, 2054; P8 0041]. Also through ‘obedience’ to the project staff, Mudzi women tried to increase the benefit that could be gained through projects that otherwise seemed senseless to them. They generally knew very well what was wanted from them by project implementers and were quite willing to play along [e.g. P3 0191, 370, 536, 2283]. I expect that this was both out of politeness and in the hope of (more valuable) handouts or inclusion in (more beneficial) future projects. When interacting with development professionals (which, for quite some time, I was also taken for, see Chapter 4) women confirmed the image of impoverished victims who benefit from external interventions. The most obvious example of such ‘playing along’ may have been the fact that the majority of women who participated in the literacy classes already knew how to read and write. To hide this, they used their left hand to seem as unaccustomed to writing as real illiterate women [P3 0536]. This manipulating of external development projects seems to be one of the few means to increase one’s personal access to resources that does not in any way trigger social disapproval. Rather, social pressure seems to be exerted by both the chief and fellow villagers to communally keep up an image of deprivation and neediness.

The accessing of resources through external development projects is generally haphazard, sporadic, and temporary. Projects come and go, often with presumptuous promises but minimal achievements. During the time of our research only one source seemed stable enough for eligible villagers to build on: the relatively substantial allowance of 1500MK\(^6\) per month for those taking care of an orphan in their household [P2 0009; P3 0555, 0705, 0923, 1095, 3939, 4057; P8 0015]. As a result of this, orphans have become a valuable asset. Consequently, in their struggle to find

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\(^6\) Approximately 7.5 Euro at the time of the research
support, some families compete to adopt their deceased relatives’ children [P3 2597, 3735, 4070].

Besides handouts and cash-for-work, Mudzi villagers are offered microloans by multiple institutions. These loans are accessible to all, but on rigid conditions. Interest rates are high (over 30 percent), instalment periods short (up to weekly), and consequences of default harsh (confiscation of goods worth 150 percent of the loan) [P2 0105, 1315; P3 3355-6]. Overall, both lay villagers and the semi-professional businesswomen that we interviewed at the markets were frightened by these preconditions and therefore most refrained from taking such formal microloans [P3 0455, 0708, 0782, 0786, 0993, 1002, 1004]. Those who decided to take a loan often did so in response to pressing monetary needs. Instead of investing it in a profit-making business, they used it to buy food, fertilizer, materials to repair a collapsed roof, or to pay back money they borrowed from fellow villagers [e.g. P2 0439; P3 2870, 3768, 3797].

In sum, external development aid can provide villagers with relatively substantial material benefit, although this benefit more often results from the handouts distributed to attract participants rather than the actual content of the project itself. However, the haphazard, sporadic and temporary nature of most projects makes them unreliable as a steady source of support. Furthermore, the selection of beneficiarie is generally in the hands of local authorities, who tend to privilege themselves, their relatives, and certain key connections. To potentially benefit from external development aid, Mudzi women must try to be on good terms with their chiefs, emphasize and overstate their destitution towards development professionals, and duly play along in often ‘weird’ project activities.

• Social network

As shown in the previous chapter, relationships other than sexual ones can also be important potential sources of support. Fostering strong ties with certain key persons as well as a level of goodwill among the community at large is an important part of women’s arsenal to access resources. Maternal uncles, brothers, or sons working in South Africa may (be asked to) send money or luxury items like blankets, bicycles, or cell phones [P2 0274, 0304, 0310, 0470, 0473, 1050, 1487, 1494, 1987; P3 0588, 0858, 0891, 0996, 1749, 1762, 1801, 2077, 2882, 3968, 4091, 4105]. Adult children within Malawi too can be called upon for support, either financial or physical [P2 0406, 1185, 1197, 1219; P3 0506, 0956, 4073, 4081, 4104]. Fellow villagers may (or may not) contribute to the many resources needed for organizing a funeral or remembrance ceremony to appease the spirit of a deceased relative [P2 0071, 0155, 0175, 1707, 1433, 1435–6, 1444, 1493, 1497, 1577, 1745, 2600]. When in need of food during the hunger season, or seeds during the planting season, multiple contacts – related and unrelated fellow villagers, or relatives outside Mudzi – can be approached and begged for tiny quantities each [P2 0724, 1229, 1282, 1376, 1439, 1881; P3 1127; P8 0006].
Besides such remittances and gifts, which do not need formal repayment, access to resources often is framed as *ganyu* or a loan, hence in exchange for labour or postponed refund. Even close relatives at times involve themselves in such explicit bartering, such as Jasmine’s son, who gave his mother maize during the hunger season, but requested to be repaid with four times its value after harvest [P2 1526, 1568]. Like receiving gifts and remittances, access to *ganyu* and loans too depends on good personal ties with the exchange partner. As one informant explained: “You cannot go to a place where they don’t know you to ask for money” [P3 1175]. In order to be granted some piecework, or be trusted enough to receive a loan, goodwill is required and must thus be fostered [P3 1965]. Having and maintaining a respectable status within the community is of vital importance for this. More so than for men, a woman’s respectable status largely depends on her conforming to the prescribed gender norms.

The direct link between one’s social status and access to community support – the ease of such access, quality and quantity of the support offered, whether for free or as an overt exchange – has been elaborately described in Chapter 7. In short, access to support often depends on one’s apparent capacity to reciprocate. Appearing capable of future reciprocity is thus crucially important in order to access support in times of need (see also Nombo & Niehof 2008). Moral obligations to share with those in need are strong, but can be evaded under certain conditions. When a villager can somehow be accused of having self-inflicted his or her need, this may be used as a justification for withholding support. Women (as do men) must thus at all times avoid giving cause for accusations of culpability for future problems.

The previous chapter shows that accessing (reciprocal) support through one’s social network is considered normal and, moreover, necessary to maintain the network. Not surprisingly then, it occurs with high frequency. However, as described in Chapter 5, the support that women can generally beg from relatives and other fellow villagers is limited, because day-to-day provisioning is considered to be foremost a husband’s task. Consequently, an unmarried woman in need of support is expected to pursue marriage rather than exclusively depend on her (non-sexual) social network.

**Making money**

- *Ganyu*

For both men and women *ganyu* is an important and widely used means to obtain money. *Ganyu* entails piecework, usually agricultural, for fellow villagers who – at a certain moment – have some money to spend. For two (related) reasons I position it between accessing money (through one’s social network) and making money (through wage labour). On the one hand, *ganyu* consists of work-for-money (or for food or seeds), and thus approaches more formal wage labour. However, granting
or being granted *ganyu* depends to a great extent on social connections and is often framed as support – both from labourer to the reward provider, and from the reward provider to the labourer. In these cases usually no explicit reward-size is agreed upon beforehand. *Ganyu* labourers just receive what the hiring party sees fit at the end of the day or the task. On the other hand, *ganyu* also falls between the two categories because of the medium-level ambivalence surrounding it. As is all ‘money making’, *ganyu* is locally characterized as a task that a man should take up [e.g. P3 3173, 3242–3, 3646, 3860]. Nonetheless, possibly because of its overlap with ‘accessing money through one’s social network’, women’s involvement in it is not as stigmatized as it is in the other two forms of money making. This may furthermore have to do with the fact that *ganyu* activities most often entail agricultural labour, which is in itself considered proper for women. For analysis sake, I classify *ganyu* under the heading ‘making money’, because of its (here relevant) characteristic as primarily a male responsibility.

*Ganyu* is not exclusively hired by those relatively better off and carried out by those most destitute (see Chapter 3) – although it is commonly understood as such by development professionals. As soon as one villager accesses a substantial amount of money, for example a sum received from a relative in South Africa, part of it is often spent immediately on hiring *ganyu* labourers [P2 0439; P3 0904]. As argued in the previous chapter, by spreading and diluting wealth in this way, envy can be averted while social capital built. Hiring labourers does thus not necessarily stem from ample financial leeway, nor does it indicate that other, arguably more urgent needs have been met. As a matter of fact, one of the most deprived women in Mudzi, the widowed Awetu Bakali (62), whose adult children all died and left her caring for the grandchildren, is too weak to cultivate sufficient maize and therefore depends on hired help on her field [P3 4057]. She scrambles for money to be able to pay for *ganyu*, at the expense of other household needs [P3 4075; P8 0014, see also P3 4074, 4098]. Furthermore, even women with husbands in South Africa at times feel compelled to hire out their labour, when they are in dire need of money and their husband fails to send support. In sum, numerous Mudzi villagers hire *ganyu* at one moment, while performing *ganyu* at another, depending on their access to and need for money (or food or seeds) [P3 3963, 3972, 4104, 4059, 4074, 4081, 4098, 4105].

Although *ganyu* is a widely resorted to means to access some money, food, or seeds, the availability of it is seasonal and, especially for women, low paid (Bryceson 2008: 100, Devereux et al. 2006a: 34). Furthermore, some Mudzi women seem to consider it somewhat shameful to perform *ganyu* [e.g. P2 1197; P3 0698, 1314, 2846] (see also Moore & Vaughan 1987: 538), possibly because it may be interpreted as revealing a lack of other, more respectable, forms of support – particularly a husband who is capable and willing to sufficiently provide [P3 2846, 3193–4, 3646]. The need to not appear without sources of support has already been discussed. Unlike the selling of crops, resorting to *ganyu* is furthermore taken to indicate a
lack of farming skills, which results in food shortages and a need to labour on other people’s fields to survive [P2 0282, 0695]. Nonetheless, begging relatives for *ganyu* is perceived as less shameful – and more effective – than begging them directly for money or maize [e.g. P3 1095, 3861, 4079].

• Wage labour
Only a handful of Mudzi women have ever been formally employed. Two have for some time worked as a housekeeper in town (receiving 4500MK⁷ per month) [P3 0496, 4093], and one even in South Africa [P3 3776]. Four women had temporarily worked at one of the plantations in the area, which employ women for specific short-term tasks (receiving 5000MK⁸ per month) [P2 2117; P3 3766, 3943, 4012]. Two women were hired to run a mini-shop at one of the nearby marketplaces (receiving 3500MK and 4000MK per month⁹) [P3 2189, 3758], a job mostly done by men [P3 0989]. Two received payment for tutoring fellow village women in the adult education program set up by an external development agency (receiving 1000MK¹⁰ per month), and two had once been appointed to register villagers entitled to orphan care support [P2 0112] and for political elections [P2 0117] respectively.

The low number of employed Mudzi women partly stems from the scarcity of jobs available to them. Generally, those who have found employment – as a bar girl, housekeeper, or nurse – live elsewhere, and were therefore not included in this research.

The job easiest available to Mudzi women is a temporary labour contract at one of the plantations in the area. However, many feel that the labour there is too strenuous, and say they cannot manage to do it [P2 1582, 1938]. It is considered a desperate measure, taken only when truly without any other form of support. As noted before, such a signal is likely to have severe negative impacts on one’s general livelihood security (more precisely one’s potential access to support from others in times of need). As soon as the Mudzi women who worked at these plantations received a relationship proposal, they gladly accepted it, and quickly quit their job [P3 3766, 3943].

• Business
Early travellers entering the region that is today called southern Malawi reported that they were greeted by both male and female local traders offering merchandise (Mandala 1984: 142). Mudzi elderly too indicate that some of their mothers (and fathers) were involved in local trading activities [P3 1277, 1326, 3485]. In Mudzi

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⁷ Approximately 22.50 Euro at the time of the research.
⁸ Approximately 25 Euro at the time of the research.
⁹ Approximately 17.50 and 20 Euro at the time of the research.
¹⁰ Approximately 5 Euro at the time of the research.
today, most small-scale businesses are in hands of women. The more substantial enterprises, for example trade in second-hand clothes, fresh fish, or ‘hardware’ (plastic gadgets like combs and sunglasses) are almost exclusively undertaken by men. Possibly, this gender division can be explained by the fact that these latter businesses need greater investment – in terms of both money and time – and therefore a relatively serious and longer-term commitment. As I will argue further on, rural Malawian women have reason not to commit seriously and invest substantially in their business endeavours.

The majority of Mudzi women have at one point in life taken up some form of small-scale business to increase the little financial capital available to them at that specific time. These businesses commonly entail either trading raw food crops that were bought elsewhere (tomatoes, green leaves, sugarcane, cassava, bananas, dried fish), or processed foods (boiled maize cobs, pastry,\textsuperscript{11} alcoholic beverages\textsuperscript{12}). The merchandise is sold from home, by vending through the villages, or by sitting at one of the small markets\textsuperscript{13} in the vicinity. The income is generally so small that they can only be used to cover day-to-day necessities, such as food, soap, body lotion, salt, matches, or paraffin [e.g. P2 0579, 0961; P3 0407, 0698–0705, 0744, 0837].

Assessing the specific timing of women’s decision to start a small-scale business reveals that four preconditions must be favourable. Overall, businesses are only taken up when 1) there is a need for income, 2) investment money is available, 3) merchandise is available at a reasonable cost, and 4) buyers have money to spend and an interest to buy. It follows from this that both seasonal and personal circumstances play a role. The life histories of Mudzi women and the market women suggest that personal circumstances play the most decisive role, but only lead to actual business undertakings when seasonal conditions allow it.

During the hunger season, although there is certainly a need for income, the little money available is used to buy maize for food, not to invest in merchandise [P2 0666; P3 0836, 1188]. Furthermore, merchandise is difficult to find and expensive at this time [P3 0390, 1023, 1067, 1116, 1483, 1524], and customers do not have purchasing power [P2 1079, 1286; P3 0836, 1191, 1472]. As the shortages deepen, virtually all business activity comes to a halt. The two small markets near Mudzi become completely deserted, and the market at the nearest trading centre stops buzzing.

It could be hypothesized that it is not only the food shortages but also this lack of business opportunities during the hunger season that intensifies women’s dependence on male support. This would further explain the peak in sexual activity during the hunger season that was described in Chapter 5. Such an argument would

\textsuperscript{11} Zigumu, mandasi, zitumbuwa, or kanyenya.

\textsuperscript{12} Either kachasu – a strong gin-type of liquor, or masese – fermented porridge.

\textsuperscript{13} In Chapter 3 I have described these markets in more detail.
not hold, however, during and after harvest season. At that time, investment money and purchasing power abound. There is little use trying to sell what can be found growing in abundance, but with little creativity, merchandise could be found or produced that appeals to buyers. In sum, conditions for business are favourable. Nonetheless, very few Mudzi women actually made use of this, and hardly any business activity developed \[e.g. \text{P3 2375, 2561}\]. Meanwhile, a peak in sexual activity was found during this season. Apparently, when having the option to gain some (more) of the wealth that proliferates around harvest time either through relationships with men or through other means, women prefer the former.

There appears to be a general consensus among Mudzi women and market women alike that businesses are only started when financial problems proliferate \[\text{P2 0557, 0605, 0954, 0979; P3 0785, 781, 0987, 0988, 1002, 1673}\]. “Kukhala olemera, geni siungapange!” one woman proclaimed: “If you are rich, you don’t do business!” \[\text{P3 0842}\]. Trading (like \textit{ganyu} and contract labour) is a strenuous and time-consuming activity, which is not always easy to combine with the female responsibilities of field, household, and child care. The long distances that must be walked to find and offer merchandise leave one tired, hungry, and covered with sweat and dust; the long hours spent at the market waiting for customers are boring \[\text{P3 1003, 1095, 1216, 1326}\]. Moreover, as noted for \textit{ganyu} and contract labour too, women’s involvement in business is surrounded with socio-cultural ambivalence – a point that is further examined in the second half of this chapter. All in all, women have good reason to leave these hardships to men. The life histories of Mudzi women indeed reveal that most instigated their business activities only after divorce \[\text{P2 0139–41; P3 0560, 0698, 0778, 0783, 3751, 3759, 3765, 3790}\]. Conversely, many stopped again once they found a new partner \[e.g. \text{P3 1062, 4100, 4104}\].

Investment money to start up a business can be found through \textit{ganyu} or the selling of crops – if either of these opportunities is available at that particular time. Some women upon divorce receive money from their mother or male matrikin to find further support through running a business, others borrow some money – if money is circulating in their social network at that time \[\text{P3 0702, 3792, 4000}\]. In the social vocabulary of Mudzi, commencement of a trade first of all signals that the trader acquired investment money from somewhere \[e.g. \text{P3 0930}\]. Because money provision is so strongly perceived of as a male affair, women’s entry into trade often triggers the presumption that she received start-up capital from a sexual partner \[e.g. \text{P3 0930}\], despite the actual variety in sources of such investment money. The implications of this common suspicion are assessed further on.

The merchandise that is available and in demand varies throughout the year, and hence so do the types of businesses\textsuperscript{14} that women engage in at any time of the year \[\text{P3}\]. Notably, this does not go for women engaged in beer or gin brewing. As they have the equipment for it, they usually resort to this trade whenever they can manage to buy ingredients.

\textsuperscript{14}
Whatever business they enter into, the profits they can make are generally small. Often, it does not take long before these meagre profit have to be fully diverted to expenses other than re-investment – food, soap, school necessities, health care, or a funeral – and business ceases [P3 0783, 1023, 1267, 1352, 1559, 3792, 3796] (see also Edriss & Kamvani 2003). Only when some new surplus capital is found, can trading temporarily be taken up again [P2 0982, 1461; P3 0703, 2358, 3749].

In sum, most of the businesses that Mudzi women engage in are small-scale, short-lived, and commonly only resorted to in between marriages. Further on, I delve deeper into this last point, by assessing why for most Mudzi women (and by extension, I expect, most women living under similar conditions) involvement in money making is incompatible with involvement in sexual relationships.

Considering this common perception in Mudzi of trade and marriage as mutually exclusive, I was highly surprised to find that the majority (23 of 32, or 74 percent) of the semi-professional businesswomen who we interviewed at the markets were, in fact, married. It appears that, although generally considered incompatible with women’s money making, marital support is at the same time imperative for women’s business endeavours to succeed. The next section therefore not only deals with reasons for the general incompatibility of marriage and women’s money making, but also with conditions under which the match does work and so can lead to relative success.

Ambivalence towards women’s money making

Amila (36) lives in one of the simplest huts of Mudzi, together with her second husband and their four children (the one surviving child from her first marriage moved to Amila’s maternal uncle after her new husband had mistreated the boy). Her field lies low and is therefore often flooded with rainwater, damaging her yield. Although last year Amila received a government coupon to purchase subsidized fertilizer (1000MK17 for a 50kg bag instead of the market price of 4500MK), Amila did not manage to gather enough money to buy it. Like always, her maize stores therefore ran out months before the general hunger season started. When possible, Amila tries to access money or supplementary maize through ganyu, but nonetheless her household often goes without food. Amila’s husband helps her to cultivate her field, but he rarely provides money for their household. He does do ganyu when this is available, but uses the little money this generates to buy cigarettes or batteries for his radio. Struggling to take care of her children, Amila recently decided to start trading sugarcane. At some hours walking

15 It would, therefore, be unrealistic to divide Mudzi women into those who have a business income and those who do not, as comparative studies elsewhere have done (e.g. Chapoto & Jayne 2006). A woman who at the time of inquiry is involved in trade, may not have been shortly before or still be long after – and vice versa. Conclusions based on the presumed difference between these two groups are thus of little value.

16 By ‘semi-professional’ I mean that the women concerned had comparatively stable businesses and were working at one of the markets almost every day rather than on an ad-hoc, on-and-off basis.

17 Approximately 5 Euro at the time of the research.
distance, in a river valley where sugarcane is cultivated, Amila buys a bundle for 80MK – the maximum load she can carry on her head. In Mudzi she sells from her house, or at a nearby crossroads. Within a few days she usually sells all her sugarcane for approximately 150MK, making 70MK profit. With this money she buys maize to feed her children on a daily basis. Despite this success, Amila’s trading activities are looked at askance, both by her husband and by fellow village women. The women ridicule her for behaving “as if she is not married” [P3 2846, 3139–40, 3153–5], while her husband refuses to carry out the usual tasks expected from a husband, such as building a grass fence. He tells Amila that, since she is making her own money now, she should just hire someone to do it for her [P3 2614]. Furthermore, he now demands that she buys him batteries, and dried fish for lunch instead of the usual green leaves that can be picked freely everywhere [P2 1770; P3 2614]. At other times, he orders Amila to stop her trading activities, accusing her of gaining profit through prostitution [P3 2562, 2589]. Amila nonetheless persists in her independent income generation, at least for the time being.

Like Amila, many of the women who were engaged in trading faced scorn from fellow villagers and, if married, from their husbands [P3 2846, 3139]. Sometimes these women themselves too complained about the fact that they felt “as if they are the husband” because of their money-making activities – confirming the ideal of men as breadwinners [P3 3060, 3205–6, 3328–9, 3998]. At other times, however, the same women showed pride about their income-generating capacities and financial independence [P3 0436, 1225, 2850, 3761], making comments like the following:

Debora (20, divorced, two children): “Now I can buy soap, I don’t beg from my mother anymore, she can rest now. The biggest problem is food, which I can now buy [through my business].” [P3 0785]

Selenia (57, married, six children): “Women who just stay [without doing business] have to beg for salt, while for us businesswomen there is no need to beg, we can just take some money and buy all we want by ourselves. I have even bought school uniforms for my children.” [P3 0743, 3761]

Ethel (28, married, four children): “Women that don’t do business have many problems, because it is difficult to get what they want. They have to go around looking for ganyu, others may start stealing or do prostitution. They cannot get the things that I am getting.” [P3 0698-9, 0702, 0744]

Furthermore, women who are fat and thus appear well off are admirably described as looking like amayi a geni [businesswomen] [P3 1171, see also P3 0993], indicating that in practice it is considered more likely that a woman’s wealth results from her own trading rather than through marriage.

It appears that women’s independent access to money is controversial and regarded with ambivalence. It is surrounded with disdain and suspicion, yet also with pride and respect. Next, I assess the various aspects that underlie this ambivalence, both within a sexual partnership and within the wider community.

Ideology of male provider

“Many women are ashamed, they say that it should be the husband who brings in money” (Emily, market woman selling dried fish at Mbera, 31, widow, three children). [P2 0963, see also P3 3139–40]
Numerous comments like the above were made by Mudzi women, indicating that “men should look for money” [P3 3262–3, also P3 0354, 2972, 3157–8, 3287–8, 3442–3, 3625], and that “women who generate money are like men” [P3 3060, 3205–6, 3328–9, 3998]. The ideology of the male provider is pervasive and persistent (and, as noted earlier, proactively upheld by women), even though in practice it is often not observed.

Unmarried women involved in income generation are ridiculed for not getting a husband to labour for them, and married women for accepting their husband’s lack of support [P2 2858; P3 0354, 2846, 3139–40, 3153–5]. A man too is mocked when his wife engages in trading activities, because this is interpreted as exposing his failure to provide [P2 1613; P3 3256, 3402–3]. It appears that a woman’s involvement in income generation is directly associated with a lack of male support. Furthermore, I have earlier noted that a man’s generous providing is considered to prove his commitment to and love for his partner. Not being well provided for thus signals that a woman is not (really or sufficiently) loved by any partner.

Suspicion of prostitution and promiscuity

The strong association of income provision with men ‘pollutes’ women’s independently acquired money. The movement inherent in most trading – either to buy or sell merchandise – furthers the distrust surrounding women’s income generation. Notably, the ChiChewa verb kuyendayenda refers both to moving around (e.g. for business purposes) as well as to having multiple partners. Women involved in business are indeed often suspected of accessing their money through sexual contacts with men [P2 0626; P3 0354, 0695, 0930, 2193, 2342, 2344, 2381, 2850, 3168]. The assumptions of Oswald (36, married) about women who go to the lake to buy fish for sale are exemplary:

“The biggest problem with businesswomen,” Oswald says, “is that when they don’t have enough money, they start chatting with various men in order to attract the men to sleep with them and give them some money. They start by asking a man: ‘Kodi simutigulira chakumwa?’ [Won’t you give me something to drink?]. Then around lunchtime, they say: ‘Tiyeni, mukatigulire nsima ku restrant’ [Let’s go, buy us some nsima at a restaurant]. And most men accept. Then at night, the woman says: ‘Mutha kubwera, palibe vuto’ [You can come, no problem].” [P2 0695]

I cannot ascertain how frequent businesswomen venturing out of Mudzi would indeed act in this way. A number of studies have delved particularly into the engagement in transactional sex by women fish traders (e.g. Bené & Merten 2008, MacPherson et al. 2012, Merten & Haller 2007), all confirming its wide occurrence. Assessing exactly what authors – and informants – mean when referring to transactional sex encounters, is, however, often difficult (see Chapter 1). I suspect that at least some of the interactions that the researchers classify as ‘economic-sex exchange’ rather fall under what are locally considered normal male-female relationship interactions. Moreover, I suspect that many third-party informant
reports consist of the sort of prostitution gossip that we also heard frequently, but never saw substantiated. Instead, most of the suspicions and gossip were proven ungrounded. The following examples reveal both the common association of women’s income with sexual involvement with men, and the (often) ungrounded nature of such suspicions:

When one of Livia’s casual lovers – the father of her last child, married elsewhere – found her selling tomatoes one day, he threatened to beat her, rationalizing that she could only have bought the tomatoes with money acquired through a sexual relationship with another man. Instead, she received the tomatoes from her mother, who in turn had received them from her son (living with his wife in Balaka town) to sell. [P2 0626]

When the husband of Tumanene (26, second marriage, 2 children) migrated to South Africa, it took time for him to find lucrative employment. In need of money to visit her ill mother in her home village, Tumanene was becoming anxious. She considered selling some of her maize to start up a temporary business to generate the required money. This, however, would be a hazardous undertaking, because the other Mudzi women married to men in South Africa would likely inform their husbands about Tumanene’s sudden disposal of money, and her engagement in trade. As such, her husband would surely hear about it. Tumanene feared that it might cause him to divorce her, as he might suspect that she obtained the money through another man, and besides that, might fear that she would be meeting even more men while moving around with her merchandise. Furthermore, he would probably feel ridiculed by being exposed as incapable of sufficiently providing for his wife despite his move to South Africa. [P2 1510, 1613]

As appears from these and other stories, there are two distinct aspects of women’s trading activities that arouse suspicion. One is their initial access to the investment money required to start a business, the second their encounters with other men while traveling and working at markets [see also P2 0598-9, 0979; P3 0701, 3179]. Both trigger suspicion and allegations of promiscuity and even prostitution [P3 0354, 3168, 3414–5].

Some Mudzi women used their partner’s fear of the temptations and promiscuity associated with women’s income-generating activities to their advantage, pressuring him into finding and sharing more resources, as we saw Grace do:

Grace (22), a pretty, young Mudzi woman and mother of two children, recently abandoned by the father of her last child, accepted work as a vendor in a small shop at the crossroads half an hour walking from Mudzi. The shop owner who offered her the job is known to like women, and the Mudzi women who gathered at our house to knit were convinced that Grace would become involved with him “to get more money” [P3 2198]. Grace’s boyfriend disapproved of her working at the shop and wanted her to stop. He told her that he tried his best to find enough money for her, already giving her relatively large sums of money, for example to have her hair treated and braided at a hair salon in Balaka town. Grace, however, refused to stop, and kept telling her boyfriend that she continued working because he was not sufficiently providing for her. [P3 2560]

Presumably, Grace feels that – for the time being at least – she has more to gain by keeping her job at the shop and maintain the tie with the shop owner, than by
investing in the relationship with her boyfriend by succumbing to his request to quit. She may not be very interested in continuing her relationship with this current boyfriend, not considering it a potentially worthwhile relationship, or she may feel that he will eventually accept her behaviour anyway. Most women, however, are reluctant to face the suspicion aroused by their involvement in money making and therefore refrain from it [e.g. P3 2344, 2381] – especially when they are married and thus have a steady partner to lose. In the following section, I further explore the troublesome match of marriage and women’s independent-income generation, as well as some women’s ways to overcome these.

The troublesome match of marriage and women’s money making

Three factors coalesce to obstruct women’s participation in business activities while married. Firstly, as described above, husbands often have difficulties coping with the uncertainty about the source of their wife’s income, fearing that it may come from other sexual partners [P2 0598–9, 0626, 0979, 1510; P3 0701, 3179]. Secondly, as also touched upon above, some men feel uncomfortable with the message that is indirectly communicated by a woman engaging in trade, namely that he fails to fulfil his duty as income provider [P2 1613; P3 3118, 3256, 3402–3]. Thirdly, the duty of married women to care for their husbands absorbs much of their time, leaving little opportunity for business activities. As Debora, an unmarried woman (20, divorced, two children) involved in trading explained:

“If I had a husband at home I would have to stop doing this business. I would have to bring him water so he can wash himself, I would have to cook him food so that he can eat. Now I don’t have that worry.” [P3 0785]

To this, Debora added: “Now I only think about how my children will eat.” Apparently, the responsibility of feeding children differs from feeding a husband. On the one hand, feeding a husband means the actual preparation of a meal, which entails collecting firewood, fetching water for cooking and cleaning, the cooking itself, serving the dishes, followed by cleaning the pots and plates. Leaving the house for an extended period of time for business purposes is incompatible with these tasks. Not only do husbands pressure wives to perform such behaviour, the community at large too condemns the married woman who wanders around selling “rather than staying at home and taking care of her husband” [P3 0354]. On the other hand, feeding one’s children as an unmarried mother entails first and foremost the acquisition of food. In the case of Debora, her children are looked after, and thus cooked for, by her mother when she is away for business. Through her trade Debora can buy the necessary maize, and in that sense fulfil the responsibility of feeding her children (and mother). It seems that is not so much women’s general duties in the field and around her house that keep them from engaging in money-making activities, as most businesswomen managed to combine these. It seemed to rather be women’s
duties as a wife towards a husband – which include remaining near the house so as to be able to give him water to drink, prepare him some food to eat, or put a bucket of water in the *bafa* for him to wash his body whenever he wants.

The three aspects of women’s money making that are disliked by men – fear of adultery, injured honour, and lack of care at home – lead some husbands to straightforwardly forbid their wives to engage in business, or at least express their disapproval of it [P2 0599, 1613; P3 2562, 3191, 3417–8, 3994]. In line with this, unmarried businesswomen are generally told to stop their trade by a new partner (which in many cases is even part of the seduction process, as the new partner will claim to be providing for her) [e.g. P3 3191]. Others, however, accept their wife’s own sourcing of income because they themselves benefit from the fruits (read: foods) of her labour [P3 2788, 2960, 3479, 3176, 3583, 3608, 3618]. Some even interpret it as a license to sit back and neglect their own responsibilities, because these can now be taken up by their money-making wife [P2 1105, 1303, 1565; P3 2796, 2960, 3608, 3618, 3630, 3641], as in the case described earlier of Amila’s husband. Other scholars in the region too have found that women’s independent money making often leads to a reduction in support from their partner (e.g. Baerends 1994: 53 on sub-Saharan Africa in general, Nyanzi et al. 2005: 18 on market women in Uganda, Omari 1994 on Tanzania in Silberschmidt 2004: 48).

Despite southern Malawian women’s involvement in trading activities for at least the past few generations, their independent money making conflicts with the currently prevalent gender ideology of women caring for children and husband, and men providing the financial means for this. Put more bluntly, it conflicts with the main substance of the marital ‘gender contract’. Logically, then, most Mudzi women feel that marriage and independent-income generation are incompatible, and preferably not combined. Considering the negative associations with both women’s money making and an unmarried status, it should come as no surprise that Mudzi women generally preferred marriage to economic independence.

Interestingly, the (Mudzi and market) women who were involved in trading while married, unanimously emphasized that their independent income had not altered the relationship with their husband [P3 0436, 0462, 0701, 0705, 0838, 3761]. Arguably, this may be one of the reasons why they succeeded in continuing their business during marriage. These women emphasized that they still consult their husband on the larger household expenses (e.g. when considering the purchase of a bicycle), bring him water when he is thirsty or wants to wash himself, and kneel down when addressing him. In other words, they seemed to make a deliberate effort to keep up the traditional deference expected from women towards their husband. This may increase the likeliness of men to allow their wife’s involvement in business activities, as one Mudzi woman claimed (Dora, 42) [P3 3205–6]. Another Mudzi woman (Sofia, 25) asserted that marriages in which the wife rather than the husband brings in the money certainly exist, but in such cases:
“You cannot say that you are the one who is taking care of the family, no! You say that the husband is the one who takes care of the family so that people should not see his foolishness.” [P3 3402–3]

Hence, a woman who wishes to maintain both her marriage and her access to independent income must tactically keep up the image of the obedient wife, towards her husband as well as in front of the community at large. In this way, a husband may accept her continued business activities, and can she maintain a level of financial autonomy while safeguarding her position as a respectable – because married – community member.

Earlier on I remarked on how many women who were exceptionally successful in running a more-or-less steady business, however small, were married. One dynamic that may underlie this was already mentioned in Chapter 5: Marriage can effectively counter the common suspicion in a community that a businesswoman obtained her (marginal) wealth through sexual indecency. This would make a woman who is involved in business and married to a man who does not (threaten to) divorce her for this more likely to persist in her money making endeavours.

Many of the relatively successful businesswomen tended to be married to men who not only condoned their business endeavours, but actually encouraged them. Most of their husbands, moreover, had a small but regular income, working as a teacher, builder, or guard. This income provided the regular (re-)investment capital necessary for most poor rural women to continue their business [e.g. P3 0993, 0995]. Because rural salaries are in many cases too small for a family to make it to the next payday without incurring debts, these husbands had encouraged their wives to invest the lump sum salary in a business which would generate extra money in small bits throughout the month [P3 0746, 0977]. Another reason why women with employed husbands may be more likely to persist in trading even during marriage is the fact that they need not stay at home to cater to their husband, as is he off to work during most of the day.

A husband who condones his wife’s money making and is both capable and willing to provide regular financial support appears to be a near requirement for women’s successful engagement in small-scale business (see also Edriss & Kamvani 2003). This is not to suggest, however, that all women with supportive husbands are likely to be involved in business [e.g. P3 1673]. The disadvantages of a woman’s independent money making are simply too many. They include, besides the aspects mentioned in this chapter, also the aspects discussed in the previous chapter on possession of wealth in general, particularly the arousal of envy and justification for exclusion for other forms of support.
Conclusion

The transactional sex paradigm asserts that helping poor women to generate an independent income is likely to reduce their reliance on (risky) sexual relationships. In the case of Mudzi, this chapter suggests however that women do not necessarily lack alternative means to support. To the contrary, Mudzi women have various options at hand to access money or generate an income independent from a sexual partner. They regularly resort to one or more of these – whenever considered necessary and possible. This commonly means that they only engage in money making when they have no husband to provide for them. Overall, it seems that women, for a number of reasons, prefer to depend on a male provider rather than attempt to be economically independent.

One reason underlying this preference is the physical hardship that generally comes with trying to combine women’s normal duties in the field and within the household with the arduous labour of making money. Another important factor is the negative connotation of women’s income generation as improper gender behaviour. As has been noted throughout, Mudzi men and women share a gender ideology in which it is men who should bring in the money. Women, in turn, should be financially taken care of by a (loving) male provider. Although honoured more in theory than in practice, this conceptualization leads women’s money making to be surrounded with ambivalence and controversy.

Earlier I have argued that access to multiple sources of support is of vital importance within the insecure livelihoods of rural Malawi. By diversifying potential support sources, villagers try to reduce the risk of finding themselves without any help in times of need. The data presented in this chapter reveal that women’s entrepreneurial endeavours are potentially threatening to their perceived entitlement and actual access to other sources of support. In the first place, a woman’s money making threatens her marital relationship (chances), as few men are willing to put up with a woman ‘wandering around’. In extension, it then also threatens women’s access to community support, as a married status is important for community respect and inclusion. Furthermore, as noted in the previous chapter, a woman’s means to generate her own income may be used as a justification by others (including her husband) to exclude her from receiving support, arguing that she does not need it. To minimize the loss of other sources of support, Mudzi women generally tend to keep their economic pursuits sporadic and brief, and where possible hidden from the public eye. Because of this, external initiatives to create or boost local income-generating activities are unlikely to be taken up seriously or for the long term, and seem unlikely to achieve their intended goal of sustainably reducing women’s poverty and their risk for HIV infection.
Discussion and conclusion

Introduction

With this anthropological case study of Mudzi village I have aimed to contribute to the discussion on links between poverty, gender inequality, and HIV risk. Current policy reports on HIV prevention, both in sub-Saharan Africa and other regions struggling with severe poverty, tend to promote a shift from individual, biomedical approaches to approaches that address the risk environment of vulnerable population groups. Women are considered particularly vulnerable, because among them infection rates are higher (in Africa) and increase faster (in both Africa and other poor regions) than among men. An increasingly widespread explanation for this is women’s economic dependence on men, which is believed to drive them to risky exchanges of sex for material support despite their awareness of the health risks involved. I call this explanatory model the ‘transactional sex paradigm’. The aim of this study was to assess the model’s applicability to sexual relationships in Mudzi, a rural community in southern Malawi where both livelihood insecurity and HIV prevalence are extremely high.

My findings from Mudzi suggest that the transactional sex paradigm builds on a simplistic and ethnocentric representation of the issues at stake. I concur with advocates of this paradigm that livelihood insecurity and gender ideologies may lead women to make risky sexual choices, but – at least in the case of Mudzi – these are not such straightforwardly causal factors in women’s vulnerability to HIV infection as is commonly assumed. Consequently, the acclaimed solution of providing women such as those in Mudzi with independent income-generating options is unlikely to achieve its desired results. Two overarching arguments have unfolded throughout this book that challenge the promoted ‘way forward’. Firstly, it was found that many aspects other than direct economic dependence on men encourage women to engage in sexual relationship practices that are risky in a context of high HIV prevalence. Secondly, while income-generating opportunities
for women are often already available, women generally consider these a less preferred option.

In this concluding chapter, I summarize the main explanatory insights that surfaced from my data analysis, and combine these to formulate a final answer to this study’s overall research question. In the following discussion I delve deeper into a number of issues that emerged from the data and are relevant to wider discussions. Finally, I wrap up with concluding remarks about the practical implications of this study’s findings for further social science research and policy making.

**Summarizing**

Here, I will not describe the major themes of this study sequentially as they appeared in the chapters. Whereas the chapters were organized in such a way to best dissect the main research question, the answering of this question benefits from a combining and different ordering of the arguments that appeared from the analyses. Where relevant I refer to the chapter in which a particular theme is explored in depth.

Notwithstanding a discourse among Mudzi villagers that “times have changed” and that frequently switching partners should be avoided in a context of AIDS, divorce is widespread and in general soon followed by remarriage. Commonly, women accept relationship proposals from men whose sexual and health histories are unknown, which further adds to women’s risk of contracting HIV. In addition, condom use remains low and partner concurrency high. In order to comprehend these various risky practices, it is necessary to disentangle the interrelated historical, cultural, and material dynamics that affect women’s daily decision making.

The historical trajectory of gender relations in southern Malawi that is discussed in Chapter 2, shows that Bantu women have long been considered pivotal society members of equal or even higher social standing than men. Various factors, among which the military power to ward off subjugation by patrilineal groups and the rejection of Christianity, have led to the perseverance of the matrilineal Bantu system among the Yao, who form the majority of my research population. Two important and related characteristics of marital relationships result from this matrilineal system, which continue to be found today: the relative weakness of the conjugal bond and the utilitarian approach to marriage. Marriage is still said to primarily revolve around ‘helping each other’, which attests to a persistent perception of husbands and wives as mutually dependent and of their respective roles as complementary.

As holders of the fields matrilineal women of southern Malawi have always been and continue to be in control of food production and preparation. Men’s traditional role was to supplement the staple foods – for example with meat through hunting or salt through trading. When money and the hut tax were introduced by the British
colonial regime, men were locally considered the logical candidates to go out and earn cash. Over the years, money has come to play an increasingly important role in rural daily life. New consumer goods triggered desire, while a multitude of factors coalesced to deteriorate farmers’ capacity to grow sufficient food. Both intensified the households’ want for money. Men continue to be held culturally responsible for providing all that a household needs beyond homegrown food, which today means first and foremost: money. Gender analysts tend to assume that the combination of households’ increased need for money with men’s designated role to earn it enhances men’s position of power at the expense of that of women. However, it appears from our data that the power balance is more nuanced. Men’s responsibility to earn money is not simply a privilege, but also a burden that women continue to lay on men’s shoulders because they think that this is to their advantage.

In Chapter 3 I note that few men in Mudzi are able to generate sufficient income to meet their own and their households’ needs and wants. Harsh ecological circumstances, combined with population pressure and detrimental political interests and disinterests of the British colonial administration, subsequent Malawian presidents, and international institutes have led to extremely high levels of livelihood insecurity throughout the country. Among others, this has resulted in widespread male migration to urban centres and to South Africa in search of work, which could explain the more-or-less permanent shortage of men in the rural areas that leaves about one-third of Mudzi women not married at any given point in time.

The struggle to overcome harsh living conditions permeates every aspect of daily village life, including, but reaching far beyond, sexual relationships. The most common means for Mudzi women to obtain resources entail marriage and semi-relationships, the cultivation and sale of food and cash crops, *ganyu* (piecework), petty trade, development projects, and a wide social network. In the ethnographic chapters these means to support are examined in detail. Throughout, it appears that villagers’ ability to mobilize resources in times of emergency is central to their survival amidst the frequent occurrence and persistent threat of livelihood shocks. It is this vital importance of spreading risk by diversifying access to multiple sources of potential future support, rather than acute deprivation per se, that underlies many women’s daily life decisions, including those concerning sexual relationships. The analyses of the ethnographic data reveal women’s tactical navigation between these various and sometimes conflicting sources of potential support in order to maximize access and minimize blockage to support.

Despite men’s general inability to generate sufficient money, Chapter 5 reveals that relationships with men are an important means for women to increase their household’s security, both directly and indirectly. Through marriage a woman attaches to her household not just additional labour power, but someone who is culturally expected to take up the heavy tasks in the field, the maintenance of the house, and the earning of money. Sexual liaisons are therefore a means to physical and material
support par excellence, as women are customarily entitled to receive, and justified to claim, such support from their partners. Furthermore, marriage accredits women with a respectable status, which enhances their access to potential future support from the wider community. Unmarried women tend to face scorn from and risk exclusion by married women who fear competition over their husband. This helps to explain why some Mudzi women also entered into or stayed involved in relationships with men who did not otherwise contribute to their household.

However, this material side of relationships is only part of the story. Men’s willingness to provide support in generally difficult circumstances is highly appreciated by women as a symbolic gesture of ‘love’, ‘care’, and ‘commitment’. Men who make the effort to provide are by definition loving husbands, while husbands who do not are discredited (and often divorced) for their disrespect and carelessness. This intertwining of material transfers with cultural norms and emotional attachment tends to be overlooked in the transactional sex paradigm, leading to incorrect interpretations of the involved women’s destitution and powerlessness.

The preference for a (stable) partnership also plays a role in women’s ambivalent attitudes towards independent income generation, described in Chapter 8. Opportunities for women to make money are regularly available, and particularly ganyu and petty-trade are often engaged in. Most village women are only involved in such activities temporarily, however, and generally just in between sexual partnerships. In other words, women can and do economically survive without men, but for a number of reasons most prefer to access support primarily through relationships with men. Husbands tend to object to women’s engagement in trade, as it negatively reflects on their image as provider and potentially exposes their wives to the advances of other men. Furthermore, income-generating activities are often tedious and considered inappropriate for women. As money is ideologically associated with men, women with cash are often suspected to have obtained it through (illicit) sexual relationships. Additionally, a woman’s access to independent income may give husbands and fellow villagers justification for withholding additional support, as it can be argued that she does not need it. At the same time, fellow villagers may assume from a woman’s ‘resort’ to money making that she has no other sources of support to turn to. This assumption makes offering her help unattractive, as she seems unlikely to be able to reciprocate. Although sharing is a social obligation, it is preferably done with people who are likely to return the favour, as explored in Chapter 7.1 Arousing suspicion that one lacks access to support may thus be detrimental to one’s livelihood security, and is therefore

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1 It must be emphasized that I do not believe that this local logic is a cultural trait characteristic of Mudzi, or Yao, or rural Malawian people. Having to make such merciless choices results rather from the desperate level of livelihood insecurity that these people must deal with on a daily basis, most probably for as long as they live.
avoided whenever possible. In sum, making money threatens a woman’s marital status, her image as a respectable woman, and her potential access to additional sources of support. Overall, accessing support through relationships with men is in line with the prevalent ‘gender contract’, and therefore more advantageous to women’s overall livelihood security.

From the various facets of gender relations a complex and confusing blend of intra-household power dynamics emerges. In matrilineal Mudzi, women own the two main assets for daily survival: the land and the house. Men need a wife for access to these. Women, however, need a husband to clear their field and build and maintain their house. Furthermore, household food security has nowadays become impossible to achieve without monetary inputs, and, as said above, finding money is considered a primarily male task. Both naturally and culturally men are better able to do ganyu or run a business, as they are often physically stronger (and never have to share their energy with a foetus, suckling baby, or child tied on their back). They are also exempted from the household chores of cooking, cleaning, fetching water and firewood that keep women busy. For reasons mentioned earlier, many women prefer and tactically maneuvre to hold men responsible for the arduous duty of money making. Overall, the gendered power scale seems quite balanced. Men and women need each other in order to secure their livelihoods and both depend on sexual relationships to prosper. However, the relative shortage of men and the resultant surplus of women in want of a husband affects this equilibrium. Competition among women intensifies and social repercussions against those without a partner chafe. This further increases the need for a husband. Although remarriage is more urgent for men than for women as they have no proper place to stay without a wife, it is easier accomplished by men – especially so when an abundance of women eagerly awaits a proposal. Nonetheless, this balance shift generally does not prevent a Mudzi woman from eventually dismissing an unsatisfactory husband. Rather, the impact of the imbalance seems to be that a man has less incentive to behave as a proper husband, as he can easily find a new partner when his current wife complains too much or sends him off.

As a result, divorce continues to be widespread, as it seems to have been throughout matrilineal Bantu history. Although the threat of AIDS has added yet another argument against marital instability, most Mudzi women remain unwilling to put up with a husband whom they feel is insufficiently committed to them and their household. The correlations found in Chapter 3 between marital status and household food security validate these women’s logic. Women staying with a husband who negatively affects the household income – because he eats without providing or helping on the field – are likely to end up in the ‘worst off’ category, whereas women involved in long-term relationships with collaborating husbands form the mainstay of the ‘best off’ category. Women who continue searching for this ideal partner form the middle group, roughly speaking.
In women’s quest for livelihood security and stable partnerships, sex is an indispensable element – the glue that solidifies a reciprocal relationship between unrelated men and women. As shown in Chapter 6, the traditional reverence towards sex as vital to personal, marital, and communal wellbeing continues to be reproduced during ceremonies and rituals performed at various stages throughout the life course of an individual. Restrictions against extramarital sex existed long before HIV entered the scene, and are still commonly subscribed to. In practice, however, trespassing is considered excusable on a number of grounds. By extension, villagers apply these same grounds to pardoning the sexual behaviours that HIV-prevention campaigns advise against. Furthermore, AIDS, like other STIs in the past, now for many seems to have transitioned into a disease that can be ‘cured’, or at least suppressed, for an extended period of time, by using medication that is freely distributed. A pragmatic mix of fearlessness, fatalism, a social need not to become associated with AIDS, and the urgency of other livelihood threats have led to a generally low prioritization of HIV prevention among Mudzi villagers. Rather than lack of negotiating power on the terms under which sex takes place, I believe it is these factors that prevent many Mudzi women from adopting the promoted ABC² practices.

In sum, the data presented in this book do not negate that economic considerations play an important role in women’s decisions to engage in sexual relationships, nor that these decisions can lead to practices that are risky in a context of high HIV prevalence. Rather, my data show that these facts should not be taken to mean that the women involved in risky sexual practices are necessarily in acute need, without other options to survive, and forced into sex against their will – as advocates of the transactional sex paradigm tend to presume. This case study first and foremost reveals that women who are not economically disadvantaged vis-à-vis men choose to engage in relationship practices that expose them to the risk of HIV infection. Notably, whereas Western analysts tend to assume that a woman’s involvement in sexual-economic exchange signals destitution, Mudzi villagers, quite to the contrary, interpret women’s involvement in non-sexual money making (be it ganyu, business, or wage labour) as forced by, and thus as sign of, deprivation. Rather than being women’s only means of support, sexual partnerships are considered the most appropriate source of support. Under the current circumstances, women have much to gain from upholding this gender construction, which permits them to leave the increasingly difficult task of finding money to men, but still capitalize on the fruits of it. Considering the high value that Mudzi women attach to spreading risk by fostering multiple sources of potential future support, sexual relationships

² As mentioned in Chapters 2 and 6, the general message of most formal HIV-prevention recommendations can be summarized as “Abstain, Be faithful, or use a Condom,” which is often abbreviated as ABC.
are likely to remain treasured as an important means of support even when other income sources are made available. Overall, Mudzi women engage in sexual relationships for a number of reasons other than those that are directly material, most of which could not be replaced by an independent income.³

It appears that the common depiction of poor women as powerless victims unwillingly forced by acute destitution to engage in direct exchanges of sex for material support does not do justice to the daily reality of life in Mudzi. The implied expectation that women will readily abstain from risky sexual practices when offered the means to generate an independent income fails to acknowledge the major role played by cultural norms, the complexity of women’s economic survival strategies, and the agency they exert in upholding the prevalent gender norms.

Generalizability
In this study of Mudzi village, the in-depth anthropological research approach has proven its worth. A quantitative end-of-project survey, which was conducted in the area during our fieldwork period, found evidence for increased self-efficacy of respondents to abstain, be faithful, use condoms, and reduce the number of sexual partners (Rimal et al. 2009). We witnessed, however, how the surveyed Mudzi women had felt insulted by the questions about their sex lives and gave mostly untruthful answers. The unknown men and women who administered the questions had been dropped off by a van, spread themselves throughout the village, arbitrarily interrogated people while offering nothing in return, and vanished again some hours later – with nonsense⁴ data, leaving behind perplexed and agitated Mudzi villagers [see P2 0191–0269; P3 0580, 2216, 2529]. This is not to suggest that quantitative studies are by definition incapable of retrieving sensitive personal data (see for example the solid studies of the AWLAE⁵ project and

³ Realistically, moreover, self-employment – which constitutes the bulk of externally organized income-generating activities for poor women – is unlikely to significantly and consistently improve households’ livelihood security. Food surpluses to sell and other commodities for trade are limited, and whenever something is available for trade, competition tends to be high. At the same time, demand is very low, because of the minimal purchasing power of the customers. Consequently, the potential profit margins are very small, and, more importantly, uncertain. Particularly this uncertainty of profit may function as disincentive to adopt a longer-term perspective. Various studies have found that wage labourers with small – but reliable – incomes tend to spend their salaries less on ‘quick fixes’ such as snacks, alcohol, or tobacco, and more on nutritious diets and education for themselves and their families than individual entrepreneurs do (Banerjee & Duflo 2012: 231–3). It appears that small-scale, low-level, self-employment opportunities are unable to provide the necessary stability to actually affect women’s livelihood choices.

⁴ I cannot say useless or worthless, because the collected data served the international, multimillion-dollar HIV behaviour-change project well with a positive evaluation.

⁵ AWLAE stands for ‘African Women Leaders in Agriculture and the Environment’, which is a Wageningen University-based project (2003-2011) in which 20 African women scholars did PhD studies of HIV/AIDS impacts on the role of women in African food and livelihood systems.
MDICP, now called MLSFH). It does make clear, however, that we must not assume that ‘the truth’ can be straightforwardly accessed, and that it takes great care to construct a truthful picture, especially where sensitive personal information is concerned (see also Bignami-Van Assche et al. 2003, Bleek 1987b, Wiegers 2007). As described in Chapter 4, I also experienced difficulties with direct questions, even though I carefully built rapport with my respondents, explained my goals, safeguarded the appropriateness of topics and questions, and compensated for the input I received. It took time, endurance, and luck – and a very good research assistant – to bridge the divide between me and the village women, and to gain insights into their intimate lives. The informal, flexible, and long-term nature of an anthropological approach and the genuine interest that was implied by our participant presence, were indispensable in this endeavour.

There are, however, also obvious weak points to my qualitative research approach. What was gained in depth was lost in breadth. The result is that I have no way of knowing to what extent our findings may or may not apply to the next village (or even Mudzi at another point in time). There are numerous variables that may affect the sexual choices of poor adult women in settings other than in Mudzi. A few scholars have undertaken cross-country reviews to explore correlations between certain variables and the occurrence of transactional sex (e.g. Chatterji et al. 2004, Luke 2003, Moore et al. 2007). As already noted in Chapter 1, however, there is little overall consistency in the findings of the studies reviewed. Here, I will briefly discuss three variables that seem of potential relevance in the light of my own analyses, although many others could be explored too. These variables concern matrilineal versus patrilineal kinship structure, Islamic versus Christian orientation, and urban versus rural locality.

The first variable (matrilineality versus patrilineality) is interesting, particularly because it is so rarely taken into account in studies of transactional sex. Commonly, in such studies the kinship structures of the researched population group are not made explicit, and in some cases informants from communities with different kinship structures are put together into one undifferentiated group. Although the relatively high degree of autonomy granted to Mudzi women by matrilineal institutions is curtailed by their livelihood insecurity and the resultant dependence on support from others, it still is a significant factor. Statistics on divorce rates and HIV prevalence suggest that the potential impact of kinship organization on sexual relationship choices should not be overlooked. Throughout Africa divorce rates and HIV prevalence are found to be significantly higher among matrilineal than among patrilineal

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6 MDICP stands for ‘Malawi Diffusion and Ideational Change Project’, now called the Malawi Longitudinal Study of Families and Health. This is a joint collaboration between the Population Studies Center at the University of Pennsylvania and the Malawi College of Medicine, concerning an on-going panel study conducted in 125 villages throughout the three regions of Malawi, broadly investigating social processes, family planning, and AIDS.
groups (see Chapter 5). Also HIV prevalence is, at least in Malawi, higher among matrilineal than patrilineal groups (see Chapter 1). However, because this variable is often not accounted for in studies on sexual decision making, conclusions about its association with HIV prevalence are difficult to draw.

Religious history is related to kinship organization. As described in Chapter 2, Christianity and Islam have had different impacts on the reproduction of ethnic traditions, including kinship systems. Christian missionaries have come in greater numbers than representatives of Islam, and have more directly interfered in the social structures of the communities with whom they worked. Among some ethnic groups, contact with missionaries eventually contributed to the transition from a predominantly matrilineal to predominantly patrilineal social organization (Phiri 1983). In many settings, however, matrilineal institutions have persisted (see Chapter 1). In a recent study on southern Malawi, Nicole Bennesch (2011) describes the ways through which Christian missionaries purposefully tried to eradicate matrilineal principles, and how the various Christian doctrines persistently hail and affirm female subordination and subservience to men (see also Ahlberg 1994: 228–33, Arnfred 2007: 142). According to Bennesch, this has severely affected women’s once strong bargaining position vis-à-vis men and contributed to a proliferation of exploitative transactional sex relationships in southern Malawi, despite the continued existence of matrilineal institutions. One explanation for the divergence of our conclusions may be the fact that Bennesch conducted her study exclusively among Christian Malawians, while mine included primarily (though not exclusively) Muslims. This would suggest that a significant difference exists between Christian and Muslim matrilineal communities. However, in my fieldwork I did not detect an association between Mudzi women’s relationship choices and their religious denomination (but, admittedly, I did not systematically investigate this). Alternatively, Bennesch’s reliance on interviews and focus group discussions, without extensive observation or data on interaction between insiders to verify the reports, may have led to a bias towards normative discourses and public perceptions rather than actual practices. Notably, at the national level there is no difference in HIV rates among Christian and Muslim Malawians (GoM 2011: 198).

The third variable concerns rural versus (poor) urban locality. Most (of the few) cities in Malawi have so-called high-density areas, in which daily life resembles that of rural areas in several respects. Living accommodations are simple and small, and generally lack electricity and running water. Sanitation exists as pit-latrines, and cooking stoves as open fires. Other aspects, however, seem substantially different. Although many urban families still cultivate some maize, their plots are mostly small and farming is not a main occupation. To a greater extent than in rural

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7 Even the city centre of Malawi’s capital Lilongwe is dotted with small parcels of land devoted to maize cultivation.
areas, food security depends on cash income. As a result, dependence on men may be stronger among poor urban women than rural women, as argued by Cole (2010: 78) and Dodoo (2004). Whereas in the rural areas of Malawi women outnumber men, this is reversed in the urban areas. This too may influence the gendered power balance. Another factor which may well affect men’s and women’s behaviour differently in rural and urban settings is the level of social control or cohesion, which is commonly assumed to be weaker in cities than in villages. Generally, reduced social cohesion is associated with increased sexual looseness and higher HIV risk. We found, however, that strong social control may actually push women to quickly remarry, which increases their exposure to HIV. A study that specifically aimed to compare sexual decision making in a (South African) rural and urban site, found that in both settings women engaged in sexual relationships for material gain (Hunter 2002). In the latter, however, the gain revolved around basic subsistence items, while in the former around luxury items (see also Chirwa & Chizimbi 2009: 43). Women’s involvement in sexual relationships to access relative luxuries has been noted in many urban studies. It has, however, also been noted by a number of studies situated in rural sub-Saharan Africa. This leads us to the following reflection on congruence between findings throughout the many different types of settings on the African continent.

Having assessed the possible disparities resulting from different research localities, it is worth noting here that one feature of sexual relationships which I encountered in Mudzi has been found by scholars throughout sub-Saharan Africa, as well as in the African diaspora (e.g. Sobo 1993 on the Caribbean). This feature relates to one of the central assumptions underlying the transactional sex paradigm. It concerns the normality and normativity of men’s gifting or providing in sexual relationships, which extends to a general acceptance or even approval of women’s involvement in a partnership for pragmatic reasons. In other words, engaging in a sexual relationship for material benefit is in itself not considered demeaning, neither by the woman involved nor by her social environment. Her involvement in such a relationship thus need not be involuntary. Although poverty or structural inequalities may still play a role in shaping women’s sexual choices, it is important to recognize that these choices are not per se driven by destitution and desperation. The recurrence of this
distinct moral attitude towards sexual-economic exchange throughout the continent might confirm the heavily criticized thesis of Caldwell et al. (1989) that there is something like an “African system of sexuality” which is internally coherent and essentially different from ‘sexual systems’ in other parts of the world.

Discussion

Revisiting morality and Caldwell’s thesis

As discussed in Chapter 1, advocates of the vulnerability approach often point to poor women’s involvement in sexual exchange relationships to typify how the combined forces of poverty and gender inequality drive the spread of HIV. Their argument contains the implicit presumption that no woman would wilfully engage in offering sex for material benefit if she were not coerced by external factors. In this section I argue that through such an explanation, Western observers and analysts judge the sexual-economic exchanges that are so widely noted in sub-Saharan Africa by their own sexual mores and logic. This perspective on transactional sex leads women to be perceived as vulnerable victims and the relationships in which they are involved as essentially coercive and exploitative. However, as well put by De Zalduondo & Bernard (1995: 158), this approach “implies an apology for sexual-economic exchange where none is needed.” The authors point out that the stigmatization of sexual exchange follows from the particular Western European cultural heritage in which ‘love’ and ‘money’ are considered mutually exclusive opposites (ibid, see also Cole 2009, Helle-Valle 2004, Nelson 1985, Wojcicki 2002), and only the first one is approved of as grounds for engaging in sex. Material benefit, considered to be the opposite of genuine love, is then, morally, the least acceptable motive for involvement in a sexual relationship.

In the book Money and the Morality of Exchange, editors Jonathan Parry & Maurice Bloch (1989) emphasize that money is not the impersonal, value-free object of exchange that it is often taken to be by Western analysts. The contributions to the volume demonstrate that instead, monetary exchanges tend to be infused with cultural meaning, symbolic interpretation, and moral evaluation – leading to great cross-cultural variation in attitudes towards money and exchange. In his chapter about Madagascar, Bloch makes a particularly strong case for the uniqueness of the European morality in which monetary transfers are considered inappropriate and experienced as uncomfortable not just within sexual but all personal relationships. He writes:

In Europe the linking of monetary exchange and sexual or familial exchange is seen as either typically immoral or as a source of humour and dissonance. By contrast, in Madagascar the need to keep the two areas separate is not present. The right thing for a man to do is to give his lover a present of money or goods after sexual intercourse. ... It is thus clear that if the Merina attitude to money strikes us ... as needing elucidation it is because the symbolism of money is powerful, not in Merina culture, but in European culture” (Bloch 1989: 166–7).
Comparing the values attached to reciprocity in intimate relationships in Ghana and the Netherlands, Van der Geest (1998) notes that while the practice is important in both settings, this importance is only openly acknowledged in Ghana. In other words, there seems to be a social taboo in the West on the overt and explicit appreciation of material exchange or benefit within intimate relationships.

Based on a comprehensive reading of the ethnographic literature on social relationships, Caldwell et al. (1989) have argued that in African settings, quite to the contrary, pragmatic instrumentalism used to be and often still is a widely accepted approach to conjugal relationships. They attribute this to the high value attached to the lineage bond at the expense of the conjugal bond. The conjugal bond is constructed as ideally auxiliary to the lineage. Mudzi women indeed framed their relationship choices primarily in a discourse of pragmatism and utilitarianism. Notably, I do not suggest that the actual underlying motives for engaging in sexual relationships are significantly different in Western and African settings. I suggest that the motives that are publicly considered appropriate seem divergent, even contradictory (see also Arnfred 2004: 23, Helle-Valle 2004: 205–6). As argued in Chapter 5, such normative templates are likely to shape actual motives, but may also be used to cover up other motives.

The issue at stake is that interpreting the motives of actors within one cultural system through the lens of another is likely to lead to distorted understandings. As an example, sociologist Ampofo writes: “Very few women in [our Ghanaian] sample were willing to remain in relationships for purely altruistic reasons, no matter how caring their boyfriends, if these could/would not support them” (1997: 189). What is overlooked in this quote is the intrinsic interconnectedness that seems to exist in many relationships throughout Africa between material support and emotional affection. As I found in Mudzi, and others have found elsewhere in Africa too (such as Bloch quoted above), a husband who does not commit to providing, can by definition, not be a loving husband. ‘Altruism’, to stick to the term used by Ampofo, is revealed precisely, and maybe predominantly, through the provision of material support.

Advocates of the transactional sex paradigm tend to perceive African women’s emphasis on the material side of sexual relationships as a breach of normative behaviour – leading them to search for the disturbing factors that must underlie such violation. This perception reveals more about these analysts’ own cultural assumptions than about the level of desperation faced by African women. In Mudzi, at least, women’s relationship pragmatism seemed an (outward show of) conformation to their community’s social norms rather than a violation of these.

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13 Studies conducted on sexuality among African urban elites and middle classes indicate that the ideology of romantic love is gaining prominence here as a measurement and expression of ‘modernity’ (Cole 2010, Cole & Thomas 2009, Hunter 2010, Spronk 2012).
As noted in the introductory chapter, the Caldwells’ thesis on an African system of sexuality has been criticized among others for generalizing on the basis of a selective reading of the available sources (called by Helle-Valle 2004: 206 the ‘not-in-my-tribe’ argument of some anthropologists). Certainly, singular statements about regions as large and diverse as sub-Saharan Africa are generalizations that gloss local variations, of which the Caldwells presumably were aware. The point, however, is that they observed a significant trend which helps us to better understand the transactional sex discussion. I believe that their argument about a distinct and coherent social system found (at least historically) throughout large parts of sub-Saharan Africa has great explanatory power when it comes to understanding the general instability of partnerships and the common utilitarian approach to these. It sheds another light on the social interactions that are widely called ‘transactional sex’ as well as its relation with the AIDS pandemic and the various – often Western donor-funded – ineffective HIV-prevention efforts.

The Caldwells’ analysis does not hold up, however, when they go on to deduce from the commonality of weak and normatively instrumental sexual relationships that there would be no traditional restrictions on sexuality whatsoever (Caldwell et al. 1989: 194–9). This aspect of their argument would not hold for Bantu descendants (as described in Chapter 6), and has also been refuted more widely (e.g. Ahlberg 1994, Ankomah 1999, Arnfred 2004b, Heald 1995). Another oft-heard criticism of the Caldwells’ explanation of sexual behaviour throughout Africa from a cultural perspective is exactly this cultural determinism. By blaming culture, it is argued, the global and local forces at play in further impoverishing and marginalizing African populations and individuals are disregarded and so become depoliticized (e.g. Stillwaggon 2006b: 133–57). It is this cultural framing of women’s engaging in transactional sex that led to what is called the ‘vulnerability approach’ (see Chapter 1). In the following section I try to ‘politicize’ my findings, assessing whether the dynamics that in Mudzi underlie risky sexual practices (although different from those envisaged by advocates of the transactional sex paradigm) may still be conceptualized as structurally violent.

**Women’s agency and structural violence**

Paul Farmer (2004: 307–8) warns against small-scale ethnographic studies that ignore oppressing macro-level structures and so tend to overestimate and romanticize the so-called “weapons of the weak.” He urges anthropologists to
always keep in focus the materiality of social life – which I hope to have done in this case study. My representation of Mudzi life should leave no doubt that poverty, underdevelopment, marginalization, and voicelessness in the global arena have detrimental impacts on people’s lives and livelihoods and seriously restrict their options for survival and self-fulfilment. The structural violence that Farmer and followers speak of does, however, not only refer to the impoverishment and global economic marginalization of Third World populations, but also to the cultural or normative marginalization of particular subgroups. It refers to a broad “machinery of social oppression” (Farmer 2004: 307) and contrasts with overt violence because it tends to be indirect, normalized, and regularized. In other words, it concerns the oppressive structures that derive power from their hegemonic character. Particularly subordinating gender ideologies are often mentioned as harming (“structurally violating”) women and as increasing their vulnerability to the risk of HIV infection. The line of reasoning behind this generally seems to be that gender inequality causes women’s relatively greater poverty, which puts them in a position of financial dependence on (sexual relationships with) men.

In the case of Mudzi I found that gender norms indeed play a role in women’s motivations to engage in relationship practices that are risky in an environment with high HIV prevalence. However, this is not so much because prevalent gender norms aggravate women’s poverty relative to that of men, so placing them in a dependency position. Rather, it has to do with women’s wish to live up to what society expects from them. More precisely, it has to do with their general preference to be with (rather than without) a partner, and their general preference not to ‘look for’ money themselves. On the one hand, these preferences probably reflect internalization of the prevalent gender ideology. On the other hand, however, I have argued they are also part of women’s tactics to maximize their access to (marital and communal) support. To what extent then would it be appropriate, or at least useful, here to conceptualize the prevalent gender norms as structurally violent – hence, as repressive gender ideologies that harm women?

Certainly the norm that a proper woman is married and provided for negatively affects women’s free choice concerning sexual relationships and income generation. Nonetheless, I object to straightforwardly considering these women as victims of the prevailing cultural scripts. Thinking of Mudzi’s gender norms as only suppressive and harmful is too one-sided to be actually helpful. In fact, those who most actively (try to) enforce the norms about proper manhood and womanhood, seem to be women themselves. One reason for Mudzi women to want a relationship is to avoid social repercussions from other women, since married women perceive the unmarried status of a fellow village woman as threatening the stability and future of their own marriage. The repercussions thus are an attempt by women to protect their marriage and their livelihood security. Women also have good reasons to actively uphold the prevalent cultural script because of what is prescribes for
men. The gender contract holds that men contribute material and physical support in their reciprocal relationships with women. It serves women well to hold men responsible for income generation, as this is generally tough work, increasingly problematic to achieve, and difficult to combine with their own responsibilities. Moreover, it reflects positively on a woman’s image to be provided for by a partner, and negatively if she must turn to making money herself. To pressure their partners to go out and look for money, women can (and persistently do) draw on the culturally underpinned norm that income provision is pre-eminently a male responsibility. Thus, while the ideology prescribing that it should be men and not women who work for income restricts women’s options for independent money making, at the same time it offers them alternative avenues for improving their livelihood security.

Notably, numerous women regularly do engage in (temporary) money making, particularly through petty trade. Interestingly, some of them expressed explicit pride about being able to provide for themselves and for defeating this gender norm, at least for the time being. These women’s explicit defiance of public scrutiny indirectly confirms the norm but also shows women’s room for manoeuvring. The very existence of this room for manoeuvring suggests that the norm is not strictly enforced and that most women comply with it relatively voluntarily. Indeed, as argued earlier, challenging the norm would, among other things, allow men to shun their responsibility for providing money to the household. It appears that women’s choice to comply with and uphold this norm is in fact a form of agency.

In sum, some of the normative gender roles indirectly contribute to women’s (and men’s) risk to contract HIV, but should not for that reason be considered as victimizing women. As we have seen, women actively use these norms for their own purposes too. Nonetheless, it remains important to keep in mind that although most women prefer to uphold the norms, this is not because they unequivocally benefit from them.

**Structural change**

With the salary that Gertrude earned as my research assistant, she has set out to obtain a bachelor’s degree. During these studies she became involved with a young man she knew through her church. After some blissful months together, the young man began to express his doubts about their future. He feared that she would not become the proper housewife that he envisioned for himself, wondering whether she would cook and clean and kneel for him given her (soon-to-be) high education level. She repeatedly assured him that she would, but his doubts were too strong. He broke up with Gertrude, which left her sad and angry.

Several of the employed young women I know from the years that I worked in Malawi’s capital Lilongwe also long to settle down and start a family – without having to relinquish their financial independence. They too have trouble finding
a partner who is not scared off by the cultural flexibility that this demands from him. One of these women once sighed: “They try to offer me a cell phone, but I already have my own. Then a television, but I have one. Then they try to seduce me by promising to buy a car, but I already have that too. Then they just don’t know what else they can do to please me, and they slink off.” These women, just like Gertrude, pay a high price for their progressive (or ‘culturally deviant’) striving for self-development and self-reliance.

Structural change – in the sense of changing cultural norms such as those discussed in the previous section – does not come about easily. Bringing about gender equality or empowerment requires much more than offering poor rural women income-generating projects. As De Zalduondo & Bernard (1995: 178) have argued specifically about (the futility of) attempts to reduce risky sex by addressing women’s poverty:

[T]o alter sexual behaviour is to alter a system that includes not only sex, but the division of labour, the family and kinship, the economic system, the class structure, health beliefs, religion and ethics – the interrelated set of conditions upon conditions which prompt and constrain the wishes and actions of individuals as they cope with a particular social and economic environment.

Multifaceted structural change would be needed to alter these “conditions upon conditions.” Rather than merely ‘freeing women from external chains’, internalized cultural scripts need rewriting too. Both the interpretations of proper womanhood and proper manhood need change to allow for relationships that build on alternative forms of reciprocity. This raises questions about ways for male partners to shape their masculinity and express affection other than through material provisioning, and about ways women can be respectable other than through remaining near the house and being provided for by a husband. A study of women’s agency in an Indonesian fishing village (Niehof 2007) yields a potential alternative. There, although a woman’s role is grounded in house and hearth, good mothers are those who can feed their families well. The income-generating activities of women in the fish trade are seen as part of their role as responsible mothers. Hence, the domestic domain as a female sphere is extended to include certain economic activities of women outside the house. Women who successfully exercise their agency in income generation for the benefit of their families are respected by other women and men alike.

In Chapter 1 I described how Giddens’ structuration theory bridges the artificial dichotomy between structure and agency by contending that the two are actually interdependent, producing social reality through bi-directional interaction. The theory has been criticized for insufficiently recognizing the potential for structural change (Rütten & Gelius 2011: 954). Others have subsequently theorized about the coming about of structural change (e.g. Dolfsma & Verburg 2005, Sewell 1992). Although difficult, it is obviously not impossible, and need not necessarily
be brought about through abrupt, revolutionary alterations. Anke Niehof (2012) has described how African women’s role in caring for the increasing number of ill relatives seems to enhance their authority and strengthen their position in an otherwise patriarchal context. Gaynor Makura-Paradza (2010) found that the fast-changing environment in patriarchal Zimbabwe allows for new and innovative ways for women divorcees and widows to access land, which leads to shifts in gender relations. In an earlier study, I found that Guatemalan women through watching *telenovelas*\(^\text{15}\) adopted the idea that female subordination was not as innate and natural as they had previously assumed (Verheijen 2005, 2006). Over time, inconspicuous daily life routines may so lead to incremental cultural change (see also Ehn & Löfgren 2009).

**Concluding notes**

From the findings presented in this book, several methodological points remain to be noted that are of relevance for further research on (risky) sexual relationships in the region. The first concerns the almost exclusive concentration of transactional sex studies on unmarried youth. Although references to transactional sex in policy reports are usually concerned with women with hungry children to care for, studies that actually assess the practice of transactional sex tend to focus on unmarried youngsters (see Chapter 1). This focus seems to result from a presumption that sexual lives change fundamentally once an individual enters into marriage. Our Mudzi study shows, however, that this need not be the case, as is also suggested by data from elsewhere in Africa (e.g. Amornkul et al. 2009, Chirwa & Chizimbi 2009, Dodoo 2004, Dunkle et al. 2004, Luke 2005a, Van den Borne 2005a). By omitting married women, divorcees, and widows from studies on risky sexual practices, these women’s motives remain unnoticed or misunderstood, and, consequently, ineffectively addressed. An exclusive focus on youth is therefore not justified when trying to understand what drives women to expose themselves to the risk of HIV infection.

Relatedly, marital status should not be taken as a static given and a stable measurement factor. Few women in Mudzi were continuously married or unmarried, and few households were permanently ‘female headed’ or ‘male headed’. Categorizing women or households into such separate groups because of their at-that-point status (which is often somewhat ambivalent anyway), and assuming that these are structurally different groups, would be of little value in Mudzi. Overall, the great majority of women face the same struggles and employ

\(^{15}\) The Latin American version of soap operas.
the same tactics to reduce their livelihood insecurity, with quick entry into marriage being one of these. In sum, our data warn against a false dichotomy of married versus unmarried, and female-headed households versus male-headed households. The number of past marriages and duration of the current marriage (e.g. less or more than five years) may be better indicators of a woman’s marital situation and household stability.

Another point of concern is women’s common discourse about destitution driving them into sexual relationships. I have argued that this representation reduces the multiple factors at stake to only one. Women’s emphasis on this particular consideration at least to some extent just expresses compliance with the cultural norm prescribing that proper women are provided for by a partner. Many studies have deduced from such self-reports, third-party reports, and focus group discussions that women’s poverty has led to a proliferation of sex exchange. I hypothesize that in many cases, informants’ emphasis on women’s destitution as underlying the spread of HIV only partially represents reality. I suggest that it is also a clever means for respondents to avert the blame for AIDS and meanwhile redirect attention to what really matters to them: the structural lack of services and commodities they face on a daily basis, or, put more broadly, their overall livelihood insecurity. The discourse of destitution driving women to engage in risky sex and so further the AIDS pandemic is one that is apparently well received by the international donor community, and therefore fits the agendas of affected communities and the mediating development agencies alike. A study assessing the impact of a particular microcredit service (Day 2007) may be taken to exemplify women’s tactical employment of risky sex and AIDS to pursue other goals. When the researcher inquired about transactional sex, the majority of respondents answered that this occurs because women are pressed to repay loans on unfavourable terms set by the particular institute that happened to be under assessment (Day 2007: 52–3).

My last point concerns the notion of transactional sex itself, which seems out of place for most sexual activities in Mudzi. Gifting and sex are both indispensable elements of ‘marital’ relationships in Mudzi and beyond. The utilitarian or instrumental approach to many of these relationships is evident. The term ‘transactional’ may be used to refer to this characteristic of mutual dependence between men and women united in sexual relationships. However, when understood, as it usually is, as a mere exchange of sex for money or material support, the concept becomes too narrow, and fails to capture the other relational aspects involved. It would be incorrect to speak of or presume the ‘selling of sex’ in this context, particularly because this is not the way in which the people involved

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perceive it. As noted, we have heard of and observed some cases in and around Mudzi in which (young) women were quite obviously and straightforwardly after the resources that they could access by faking interest in a sexual relationship or actually sleeping with a man who proposed.\footnote{E.g. P2 1560, 1721, 1728, 1740; P3 2470. Notably, even these cases did not seem void of relationship symbolism, of a performance of normative gender expectations. Interestingly, furthermore, these cases particularly concerned the younger women who were reasonably taken care of at home. They therefore did not desperately need a husband, but could have many flings in order to access as many gifts as possible. With other words, destitution was less of a threat to them than to others, which was exactly what allowed them to engage more freely in casual sexual encounters.} However, these cases, in which the transaction was hollowed out to an almost direct exchange of sexual favours for material benefit, do not represent the relationship practice that poses the greatest or main HIV risk for the general population. It is rather most women’s continuous search for a steady, reliable, helpful husband combined with the frequency of breakups that seems to facilitate the spreading of HIV (combined with other earlier-mentioned factors such as men’s frequent migration, which ‘imports’ the virus into the community, and the low priority given to HIV prevention amidst more urgent problems).

In part, this study was set up with the aim of formulating recommendations for improving HIV prevention policy.\footnote{As described in Chapter 4, this research has been co-funded by the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs as part of their IS-Academy, an initiative aimed at stimulating policy-relevant social science research.} I have aimed to achieve this by assessing to what extent the currently common assumption that women need economic empowerment to reduce their vulnerability to HIV infection is justified. As explicated throughout, I do not expect that Mudzi women would make safer sexual choices if they were offered additional means to gain an independent income. The interrelations between livelihood insecurity and risky sexual behaviour are more complex and less straightforward than usually presumed and cannot simply be remedied with income-generating projects. Instead of persisting with the perception that women lack agency to change their sexual behaviour, it should be acknowledged that women have certain reasons for engaging in risky relationship practices. Moreover, they may also have good reasons to refrain from or limit their involvement in independent income generation. Understanding these underlying reasons is a prerequisite for formulating any attempt to assist in changing the current situation, and I hope that this study has contributed to such an enhanced understanding.

This should not be interpreted as an argument against a policy focus on poverty reduction. Although I found in Mudzi that it is not acute poverty per se which motivates women to risk HIV infection, many of women’s daily life choices – including those related to sexual interaction – are shaped by pervading and persistent livelihood insecurity. If a woman would have access to other safety nets besides...
her primary social network, the social exclusion that may result from an unmarried status would be less life threatening, and thus reduce the pressure on women to acquire a partner. Furthermore, if the problems that are now experienced as more direct and urgent than the threat of AIDS can be successfully addressed, villagers may begin to prioritize HIV prevention. A brighter future may encourage Mudzi villagers to make longer-term investments, including in their health. The findings presented in this book do therefore not deny the need to reduce rural women’s livelihood insecurity. To the contrary, as an HIV prevention focus it remains valid and important – provided that this insecurity is understood as only partially explaining women’s relationship choices, and the causes and consequences of the insecurity as broader and more complex than female economic dependence on men.
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Appendix 1: Overview of reviewed literature on transactional sex

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Study</th>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Research pop.</th>
<th>Urban/ rural</th>
<th>Method</th>
<th>Conclusion about factors underlying/related to transactional (or risky) sex</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ackermann &amp; De Klerk</td>
<td>2002</td>
<td>South Africa</td>
<td>Women</td>
<td>both</td>
<td>Literature review</td>
<td>Transactional sex result of female poverty and male control of sexuality</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ankomah</td>
<td>1999</td>
<td>Ghana</td>
<td>Premarital youth</td>
<td>urban</td>
<td>FGDs (6), in-depth interviews (78)</td>
<td>Relationships about material gain; economic need + societal norms obstruct women to negotiate safe sex.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bennesch</td>
<td>2011</td>
<td>Malawi</td>
<td>Villagers, Christian religious leaders, university students, NGO employees</td>
<td>both</td>
<td>Interviews, FGDs</td>
<td>Matrilineal women’s once strong social position severely undermined throughout history, leading them now to depend heavily on exploitative sexual relationships with men.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bryceson &amp; Fonseca</td>
<td>2005</td>
<td>Malawi</td>
<td>Peasants</td>
<td>(semi) rural</td>
<td>Key informant interviews, FGDs, survey 141 rural households</td>
<td>Destitution increasingly pushing women to transactional sex e.g. as form of ganyu.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Buseh et al.</td>
<td>2002</td>
<td>Swaziland</td>
<td>General population, health staff</td>
<td>rural mission</td>
<td>FGDs (3)</td>
<td>Women may have extra-marital partners for economic security and lack power to negotiate terms of sex.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Caldwell et al.</td>
<td>1989</td>
<td>Sub-Saharan Africa</td>
<td>General population</td>
<td>both</td>
<td>Literature review</td>
<td>Focus on lineage procreation encourages sex without limits. Economic exchange in sexual relationships is common and considered normal.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Campbell</td>
<td>2000</td>
<td>South Africa</td>
<td>Female commercial sex workers</td>
<td>Mining community</td>
<td>In-depth interviews 21 CSWs</td>
<td>Most women unwillingly pushed into sex work by destitution and lack of other livelihood options.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chatterji et al.</td>
<td>2005</td>
<td>12 countries sub-Saharan Africa</td>
<td>Youth</td>
<td>both</td>
<td>Existing national survey statistics</td>
<td>In most countries TS highest among 15-19 girls, unmarried, non-Muslim women + young, unmarried &amp; Muslim men. No consistent correlation with socio-economic status, location, or in-school status.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cluver et al.</td>
<td>2011</td>
<td>South Africa</td>
<td>AIDS-orphans</td>
<td>Peri-urban settlements</td>
<td>Longitudinal follow up of 723 adolescents</td>
<td>Familial AIDS, food insecurity, and exposure to abuse raised prevalence of transactional sex amongst girls from 1% to 57%.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cole</td>
<td>2010</td>
<td>Madagascar</td>
<td>Young women</td>
<td>urban</td>
<td>Ethnographic approach</td>
<td>Money is means to achieve respected social adulthood, support expected from male sexual partners à women’s use of sexuality to amass resources is socially respected and valued.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Author</td>
<td>Year</td>
<td>Location</td>
<td>Population Type</td>
<td>Methodology</td>
<td>Findings</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-----------------</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cornwall</td>
<td>2002</td>
<td>Nigeria</td>
<td>General population</td>
<td>Small town Ethnographic approach</td>
<td>Despite locally prevalent discourse on contemporary women as running after money, women only divorce after severe hardship. Husbands expected to provide even if wife has money.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dodoo</td>
<td>2004</td>
<td>Africa</td>
<td>Urban poor</td>
<td>Urban Existing national statistics, FGDs</td>
<td>Risky sex is economic survival strategy, particularly among urban, poor women.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dunkle et al.</td>
<td>2004</td>
<td>South Africa</td>
<td>Women</td>
<td>Structured questionnaires</td>
<td>Sex with non-primary partner motivated by material gain = 20%; associated with higher HIV infection, gender-based violence, substance use, socio-economic disadvantage.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dunkle et al.</td>
<td>2007</td>
<td>South Africa</td>
<td>Young men aged 15-26</td>
<td>Interviews 1288 men</td>
<td>Strong link between transactional sex and gender-based violence. Men get resources through sexual partnerships too.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gilbert &amp; Walker</td>
<td>2002</td>
<td>South Africa</td>
<td>Women</td>
<td>National statistics</td>
<td>Strong association of HIV infection with low income, high unemployment, and poor education; women worst off.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gysels et al.</td>
<td>2002</td>
<td>Uganda</td>
<td>Sex workers</td>
<td>Life histories (34), participant observation, sexual diaries</td>
<td>Disadvantaged backgrounds played role in move into commercial sex. Better economic situation = better negotiating position.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hallman</td>
<td>2004</td>
<td>South Africa</td>
<td>Youth aged 14-24</td>
<td>Household survey</td>
<td>Economic disadvantage associated with risky sex (including transactional sex), particularly for (young) women.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Haram</td>
<td>1995</td>
<td>Tanzania</td>
<td>Unmarried youth incl single mothers</td>
<td>Long-term fieldwork, life histories</td>
<td>Gifting pivotal aspect of all relationships and particularly sexual. Young women barter sex for economic benefit. Aware of HIV risk, but for many it is economically and socially too costly to abandon relationship.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hargreaves et al.</td>
<td>2007</td>
<td>South Africa</td>
<td>Age group 14-35</td>
<td>Cohort survey 1967 respondents</td>
<td>Only low education for women related to increased HIV incidence (household wealth, marital status, and mobility unrelated).</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hawkins et al.</td>
<td>2009</td>
<td>Mozambique</td>
<td>Young women</td>
<td>Peer in-depth interviews</td>
<td>By extracting financial and material resources from older men through power of their sexuality, young women construct a positive identity and esteem linked to perceptions of modernity and consumption and their ability to access consumer goods.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Helle-Valle</td>
<td>1999</td>
<td>Botswana</td>
<td>General population</td>
<td>Ethnographic research</td>
<td>Material support generates agency, women can remain independent through informal sexual relationships.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hunter</td>
<td>2002</td>
<td>South Africa</td>
<td>Young women</td>
<td>Ethnographic research</td>
<td>Rural setting à limited livelihood options à sex for subsistence needs; urban setting à less destitution à sex for socially motivated consumption desires, women more agency</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Study</td>
<td>Year</td>
<td>Country</td>
<td>Age Group</td>
<td>Setting</td>
<td>Data Collection</td>
<td>Findings</td>
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<tr>
<td>Kaufman &amp; Stavrou</td>
<td>2004</td>
<td>South Africa</td>
<td>Age group 14-22, 3 races (African, Indian, White)</td>
<td>urban</td>
<td>FGDs (10)</td>
<td>Gifting among like-age adolescents is common &amp; important in shaping sexual relationships.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Keene</td>
<td>2001</td>
<td>Uganda, Botswana</td>
<td>Women</td>
<td>Not specific</td>
<td>Literature review</td>
<td>Educational, socio-economic, and cultural disadvantages increase HIV risk in general, but particularly for women, who are pushed to rely on transactional sex with one or several men to gain access to needed resources.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leclerc-Madlala</td>
<td>2002</td>
<td>South Africa</td>
<td>Youth</td>
<td>peri-urban</td>
<td>Ethnographic approach</td>
<td>Pre-existing sexual cultures &amp; gender inequality with new influences (migration, increasing poverty, family disintegration, new ways for acquiring &amp; demonstrating wealth) stimulate transactional sex and prove fertile ground for HIV.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leclerc-Madlala</td>
<td>2003</td>
<td>South Africa</td>
<td>Youth</td>
<td>urban</td>
<td>Ethnographic approach</td>
<td>Transactional sex perceived as normal, leading to multiple liaisons, exploited for new ‘needs’ commodities of modernity.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Luke</td>
<td>2003</td>
<td>Sub-Saharan Africa</td>
<td>Adolescents</td>
<td>both</td>
<td>Literature review</td>
<td>Cross generational sex common; girls exert agency over who to date and how long, but less control over sexual practices. Gifts and violence limit girls’ negotiating power.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Luke</td>
<td>2006</td>
<td>Kenya</td>
<td>Males aged 21-45</td>
<td>urban</td>
<td>Survey 2700 males</td>
<td>Monetary and non-monetary transfers in non-marital non-commercial relationships impact negatively on condom use, irrespective of woman’s age. Women make trade-off between risk and material benefit</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Machel</td>
<td>2001</td>
<td>Mozambique</td>
<td>School girls aged 14-20 of middle and working class</td>
<td>urban</td>
<td>Interviews + survey 182 girls</td>
<td>Girls with lower socio-economic status more vulnerable than higher SES: more accepting gender power differences, less assertive, more economically dependent on partner weakening bargaining power safe sex.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MacPherson et al.</td>
<td>2012</td>
<td>Malawi</td>
<td>Fishing community</td>
<td>rural</td>
<td>Participant observation, FGDs, semi-structured interviews</td>
<td>Transactional sex common, women particularly vulnerable in negotiation because of existing gendered power structures.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maganja et al.</td>
<td>2007</td>
<td>Tanzania</td>
<td>Youth 16-24</td>
<td>urban</td>
<td>Interviews (60), 14 FGDs (14)</td>
<td>Transactional sex in both casual &amp; committed relationships; much distrust; sex-gift exchange expected otherwise extra partners/breakup/rape; women exert agency but still at disadvantage negotiating safe sex.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Masvawure</td>
<td>2010</td>
<td>Zimbabwe</td>
<td>University students</td>
<td>urban</td>
<td>Participant observation, in-depth interviews</td>
<td>Transactional sex for social status, to feel and be perceived of as modern &amp; successful.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Author(s)</td>
<td>Year</td>
<td>Location</td>
<td>Age Group</td>
<td>Setting</td>
<td>Research Methodology</td>
<td>Findings</td>
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<tr>
<td>Meekers &amp; Calves</td>
<td>1997</td>
<td>Cameroon</td>
<td>Youth aged 17-25</td>
<td>Urban FGDs</td>
<td>Economic need leads many young women to use premarital sexual relations (incl multiple partners) for economic support, despite HIV risk.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Merten &amp; Haller</td>
<td>2007</td>
<td>Zambia</td>
<td>Fishermen, fish trader</td>
<td>Rural Participant observation, FGDs, interviews</td>
<td>Fish-for-sex exchanges not based on tradition, but on the economic opportunities provided in conditions of poverty and changing livelihoods.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mill &amp; Anarfi</td>
<td>2002</td>
<td>Ghana</td>
<td>HIV positive women</td>
<td>Both In-depth Interviews</td>
<td>Poverty, through limited education and vocational skills, led women to take on boyfriends to support them as survival strategy.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Miller et al.</td>
<td>2010</td>
<td>Uganda</td>
<td>HIV positive people</td>
<td>Rural clinic In-depth interviews</td>
<td>Food security increases female vulnerability by pushing them into transactional sex and violent relationships, and limiting their control over condom use.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mills &amp; Ssewakiryanga</td>
<td>2005</td>
<td>Uganda</td>
<td>University youth</td>
<td>Urban Single sex mixed FGDs</td>
<td>Fragile masculinities depend (a.o.) on providing for girlfriend while avoiding to be stripped of all income; both genders secretive about wealth. Ideology of romantic love less central to people’s aspirations than centrality of money as symbol through which relationships are practiced and understood.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moore et al.</td>
<td>2007</td>
<td>Burkina Faso, Ghana, Malawi, Uganda</td>
<td>Youth aged 12-19</td>
<td>Both Nationally representative household surveys, FGDs, in-depth interviews</td>
<td>Transactional sex very common, unrelated to household economic status, orphan hood, education level, age difference, or condom use.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Munthali et al.</td>
<td>2006</td>
<td>Malawi</td>
<td>Adolescents aged 12-19</td>
<td>Both Nationally representative household survey</td>
<td>4 out of 5 girls received something (96% money) in exchange for sex in past year, indicating that this is a common feature of routine dating &amp; courting.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nnko et al.</td>
<td>2001</td>
<td>Tanzania</td>
<td>Out-of-school adolescents</td>
<td>Rural Social mapping 2 communities, narrative research workshops (10), in-depth interviews (81)</td>
<td>Exchange of money and gifts for sex was reported by both female and male adolescents, but perception and interpretation differed: Males perceived that females engage in sex largely for material gain while females saw it as display of partner’s love or commitment.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nnko &amp; Pool</td>
<td>1997</td>
<td>Tanzania</td>
<td>School youth</td>
<td>Urban Role plays</td>
<td>For boys sexual desire is important motivating factor, for girls an ambiguous mixture of attraction &amp; financial gain. Girls often quite competent in negotiating financially rewarding sexual deals.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Study</td>
<td>Year</td>
<td>Country</td>
<td>Study Sample</td>
<td>Setting</td>
<td>Methodology</td>
<td>Findings</td>
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<tr>
<td>Nyanzi et al.</td>
<td>2001</td>
<td>Uganda</td>
<td>School youth</td>
<td>rural</td>
<td>Role plays, FGDs, interviews (30) + survey (80)</td>
<td>Girls feel humiliated if not receiving anything for sex, receipt of money/gifts confers social status among peer group. Boys think only HIV+ girls would give free sex.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oyefara</td>
<td>2007</td>
<td>Nigeria</td>
<td>Female commercial sex workers</td>
<td>urban</td>
<td>Survey (320), in-depth interviews (10)</td>
<td>35% joined sex industry out of poverty and lacking other means of finding food; poverty &amp; food insecurity lowered condom use.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poulin</td>
<td>2007</td>
<td>Malawi</td>
<td>Premarital youth aged 15-24</td>
<td>rural</td>
<td>Field observations, in-depth interviews (54), survey data</td>
<td>Transfers are as much an expression of love/commitment as meeting material needs (women) or get sex (men); part and parcel of normal relationship; size of transfer unrelated to condom use, rather love/commitment/seriousness; girls have power over relationships beyond negotiating safe sex.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Robinson &amp; Yeh</td>
<td>2011</td>
<td>Kenya</td>
<td>Formal &amp; informal female commercial sex workers</td>
<td>semi-urban</td>
<td>Self-report diaries (192)</td>
<td>When household member (mostly child) falls ill, CSW (of whom many did not self-identify as such), particularly the poorer ones, intensified risky sexual contacts (anal or unprotected intercourse).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shefer et al.</td>
<td>2010</td>
<td>South Africa</td>
<td>University students</td>
<td>urban</td>
<td>Narrative analysis</td>
<td>Unequal power dynamics between urban-rural and local-foreigner divides, and across wealth, age and status exacerbate unsafe and coercive sexual practices.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Silberschmidt &amp; Rasch</td>
<td>2001</td>
<td>Tanzania</td>
<td>Girls aged 15-19 who aborted</td>
<td>urban</td>
<td>Semi-structured interviews (51)</td>
<td>Girls not only victims but also willing preys and active social agents engaging in high-risk sexual behaviour for material gain. Vast majority involved with business men twice their age.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stoebenau et al.</td>
<td>2011</td>
<td>South Africa, Lesotho, Madagascar</td>
<td>Youth</td>
<td>urban</td>
<td>FGDs, interviews, survey</td>
<td>Transactional sex linked to consumerism, women not passive victims (use sexuality to extract resources) but agency within limits --&gt; men continue to determine the terms.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Swidler &amp; Watkins</td>
<td>2007</td>
<td>Malawi</td>
<td>General population</td>
<td>rural</td>
<td>Conversation diaries of 22 local observers</td>
<td>Patron–client ties and moral obligation to support the needy underlie transactional sex, rather than simply male lust and female poverty.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tawfik &amp; Watkins</td>
<td>2007</td>
<td>Malawi</td>
<td>General population</td>
<td>rural</td>
<td>Conversation diaries of 22 local observers</td>
<td>In policy circles women from rural Malawi said to engage in extra-marital sex because they need money for survival, but women themselves say they are not only motivated by money for survival but also for attractive consumer goods, by passion, and by revenge for a husband’s infidelity.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Study</td>
<td>Year</td>
<td>Location</td>
<td>Population</td>
<td>Research Methods</td>
<td>Findings</td>
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<tr>
<td>Van den Borne 2005</td>
<td></td>
<td>Malawi</td>
<td>Informal sex workers</td>
<td>Semi-structured in-depth conversations, FGDs, observations</td>
<td>Women materially motivated, but hope for lasting relationship. Sex-money transactions under cover of normal male-female reciprocity, to distance both sex worker and client from tabooed prostitution, and increase chances of supportive relationship to become lasting.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Van Eerdewijk 2007</td>
<td>2007</td>
<td>Senegal</td>
<td>Premarital youth</td>
<td>Participant observation, interviews, FGDs</td>
<td>Money &amp; gifts understood as expression of boyfriends’ love and care; occurs in all sexual relationships - despite discourse on incompatibility of love and material interest.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wamoyi et al. 2010</td>
<td>2010</td>
<td>Tanzania</td>
<td>Premarital youth</td>
<td>Participant observation, interviews, FGDs, survey</td>
<td>At micro-level girls quite powerful, actively using sexuality as resource. Sex-gift exchange basis of most relationships, entered for material gain: basics, luxuries, peer pressure.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Weiser et al. 2007</td>
<td>2007</td>
<td>Botswana, Swaziland</td>
<td>Adults aged 18-49</td>
<td>Cross-sectional survey 2000 adults</td>
<td>Food insufficiency associated with inconsistent condom use, sex exchange, intergenerational sex, lack of control in sexual relationships - among women, not men.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wojcicki 2002</td>
<td>2002</td>
<td>South Africa</td>
<td>Women aged 20-45 who frequent bars to exchange sex for money</td>
<td>Participant observation, 50 interviews</td>
<td>Women economically motivated, for basic needs or luxuries, but not self-identifying nor seen as commercial sex worker. When exchange/bargain is not made explicit, and women’s financial need emphasized, then less stigma involved than CSW.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix 2: Interview guide ‘baseline’ all adult Mudzi women

1. Name + (ex) husband’s name
2. Age/When born
3. Area of origin (If elsewhere: since when in this village, came with who, why?)
4. Ethnic group & religion
6. (Ex) Husband’s area of origin & ethnic group. Age.
7. Marital history: Have you been married before? / Is this your first marriage? Can you tell me about previous marriages: how started and ended?
8. How many children did you give birth to? When did you have your first & last child? Still alive? Died as children or adults? How many people stay in your HH?
9. Education level: When did you leave school & why?
10. What are your household’s sources of income? What is money used for? Who decides what the money is used for & why? Do you have independent income? Since when, why, size & use of profit, how life/relationship changed
11. How many acres land do you own? And husband? Who farms (which field) All of it cultivated last season? Why (not)?
12. Which crops do you cultivate? Size of harvest this year? What done with harvest? If sold: where, when, how much?
15. Faced any problems cultivating crops last season?
16. How much still left of harvest? Until when do you expect your HH can eat from this? How survive afterwards? Eating differently now?
17. Does your HH own blankets, bed, radio, bicycle, cell phone, school uniforms, livestock? [check: IRON SHEETS?]
19. Can you tell me about your health? How often have you been ill in the last year? What kind of illnesses?
20. What do you consider to be the biggest problem/difficulty in your HH & community?
Appendix 3: Interview guide market women

1. Name, age, village, type of business
2. Is this your own business or employed?
3. Since when? How did you find money to start business
4. Where/How do you get product? How often?
5. When & where do you sell?
6. Married? (First? Since when? Why divorced?) How many people in HH? Through what ways does HH find food? Do you also farm? How combining these activities?
7. Went to school? When left & why?
8. How much profit? What do you do with income? Who decides on expenditure?
9. How has business changed your life/relationship? In your opinion: In which ways are business women like you different from rural non-business women?
10. Do you know any organizations that give out loans for small businesses? Made use of loans? Why (not)?
Summary

The ‘transactional sex paradigm’

The aim of this book is to test, through a Malawian case study, the hypothesis that improved livelihood security for women will lead them to make safer sexual choices. This hypothesis arises from the widespread assumption, especially prevalent in public health and development literature, that poverty and gender inequality push women to sexual risk taking. Perceived as poor and marginalized, African women are often assumed to have few other means to survive than to exchange sexual favours for material support from men. This dependence on male support, the assertion goes, puts women in a disadvantaged position when it comes to negotiating safe sexual practices while pushing them to seek multiple sex partners – hence significantly increasing the risk of HIV transmission. To reverse the downward spiral of poverty and AIDS, many reports conclude, it is imperative to economically empower women so as to reduce their need to resort to risky survival sex. As this line of argument has become so commonplace, and goes uncontested in much of the literature, I refer to it as a paradigm: the ‘transactional sex paradigm’.

Malawi and AIDS

Malawi is one of the least developed countries worldwide. Within Malawi, poverty and malnutrition are most severe in the rural areas and in the Southern Region. Ever since HIV prevalence became monitored Malawi has also been among the top ten countries with the highest infection rates. It is currently estimated that 11 percent of the population between the ages 15 and 49 lives with the virus. As is the case throughout sub-Saharan Africa (but, notably, nowhere else) infection rates are higher among women (13%) than among men (8%). As in most of the world, prevalence is more prominent in the urban areas (17%) than in the rural areas (9%), but it is increasing in the rural areas while diminishing in the urban areas. In Malawi, HIV rates have always been substantially higher in the Southern Region (15%) than in the Central (8%) and Northern (7%) Region. Although national HIV prevalence has slowly declined, HIV incidence remains highest in the Southern Region.

Because both poverty and HIV prevalence are extraordinarily high in Malawi, peaking in the Southern Region and on the rise in the rural areas, I expected that a possible link between the two would be most pronounced and best discernible here. A village community in one of Malawi’s southern districts was therefore selected as the research site for this study. Intriguingly, most village communities in Malawi’s south are matrilineally and matrilocally organized. This means that as a rule it is the women who hold the rights to land and who remain resident near their (maternal) kin. Upon marriage a woman is joined by her husband, who is supposed to help cultivate her field and build a house that is hers to keep in case of divorce. Various studies found that, as a result, these women’s livelihoods are relatively secure compared to that of other rural Malawian women. In other words, the very
site that was selected because of its extremely high levels of both food insecurity and HIV prevalence – which, following the transactional sex paradigm, would suggest a low socio-economic status of women vis-à-vis men – seems a rather favourable environment for women. These women’s comparatively good socio-economic position makes them particularly interesting to study, as an analysis of their sexual choices may shed light on the hypothetical impact of female economic empowerment on HIV transmission.

Data collection
The data on which this study draws are largely ethnographic, collected through daily participant observation and many informal chats during a one-year stay in the research community between August 2008 and July 2009. The data were collected by me – a Dutch woman with a degree in cultural anthropology, work experience in Malawi during the three years prior to this study, and some fluency in the most commonly spoken language – with the invaluable help of my research assistant – a Malawian woman with a secondary education degree, who is not originally from the research area but fluent in both languages spoken there. The main method of informal data collection was greatly facilitated by a spontaneous gathering of village women at our house each afternoon to learn to knit from my research assistant, meanwhile chatting with each other and us. Additionally, we interviewed all ninety adult women living in the research village on several occasions during the research period, had four women keep financial diaries, interviewed thirty randomly selected small-scale businesswomen selling various types of merchandise on one of the three markets near the research village, and retrieved birth statistics from the two health clinics in the area.

Balancing men, morals and money
Notwithstanding high levels of awareness about HIV and ways to avoid it, partner switches and concurrent partnerships were found to be common at the research site. Moreover, the village women often accepted relationship proposals from men whose sexual and health histories were unknown, which further added to their risk of contracting HIV. By disentangling the interrelated historical, cultural, and material dynamics that affect women’s daily decision making, this study endeavoured to comprehend women’s risky sexual practices.

Based on the insights gained, I argue that the ‘transactional sex paradigm’, which is increasingly used to explain the continued spread of HIV throughout sub-Saharan Africa and consequently inform policy, overlooks certain important cultural and socio-economic aspects of women’s sexual choices. While confirming the widespread assumption that the need for support plays a role in poor women’s decisions to readily accept sexual proposals from men, my data demonstrate that the interrelations between livelihood insecurity and risky sexual behaviour are more complex and less straightforward than usually presumed.
The harsh living conditions and the struggles to overcome them permeate every aspect of daily village life, including, but reaching far beyond, sexual relationships. Central to villagers’ survival amidst the frequent occurrence and persistent threat of livelihood shocks is their ability to mobilize resources in times of need. It is this vital importance of access to multiple sources of potential future support rather than acute deprivation per se that underlies many of the daily life decisions of women, including those concerning sexual relationships. Throughout this book women’s tactical navigation is revealed between the various, and sometimes conflicting sources of potential support in order to maximize access and minimize blockage to it.

In the village studied, sexual liaisons are a means to material support par excellence because it is traditionally expected that men provide their partner with the necessary extras beyond the foods she cultivates from her own field. Women are thus entitled to receive, and justified to claim, support from their sexual partners. However, (right to) direct receipt of support from men is not the only reason for women to engage in sexual relationships. Being in a relationship provides women a respectable status, which enhances their access to community support. This is an important reason for many women to enter into or stay involved in relationships with men, even if they do not directly benefit their household. Factors that thus also play a role are the wish to conform to cultural norms, gaining or maintaining a respectable status, and averting suspicion, jealousy, and consequent community exclusion. Further reasons are longing for affection, sexual satisfaction, and offspring, and benefitting from other duties that husbands are supposed to perform besides providing money. In other words, most of the reasons for women to be involved in a relationship cannot simply be resolved by an independent income. Moreover, considering the high value that the village women attach to spreading risk by fostering multiple sources of potential future support, sexual relationships are likely to remain treasured as an important means to access support even when other income sources are made available.

The assumption that access to income-generating options will affect women’s sexual decision-making is furthermore challenged by our findings concerning women’s means to earn money. Notably, independent income-generating options are already available and regularly resorted to. They do not, however, improve women’s livelihood security as advocates of female economic empowerment commonly assume. Women’s involvement in money making signals a number of messages that potentially block other channels of support, and is therefore a generally less preferred option. Income generation is culturally considered a male responsibility, which in principle makes it unnecessary, inappropriate, and disrespectful for women to engage in. As money is so intrinsically associated with men, women with wealth are routinely suspected to have obtained it through (illicit) sexual relationships. A woman’s access to independent income may furthermore give husbands and fellow villagers a justification for withholding additional
support, as it can be argued that she does not need it. At the same time, fellow villagers may assume from a woman’s ‘resort’ to money making that she has no other sources of support to turn to. This assumption makes her unattractive to help in times of need as she seems unlikely to be able to reciprocate. Although sharing is a social obligation, it is – out of necessity – preferably done with people who are likely to return the favour. Arousing suspicion that one lacks access to support may thus be detrimental to one’s livelihood security, and is therefore avoided when possible. In sum, a woman’s money making threatens her marital status, her image as respectable woman, and her potential access to additional sources of support. Overall, accessing support through relationships with men is in line with the prevalent ‘gender contract’, and therefore more advantageous to women’s overall livelihood security. In the current circumstances, women have much to gain from upholding these gender norms, which allow them to leave the laborious task of finding money to men, but still capitalize on the fruits of it.

Hence, while Western analysts tend to assume that a woman’s involvement in sexual-economic exchange signals destitution that leaves her no choice, my informants held quite an opposing view. They instead tended to interpret women’s involvement in non-sexual money making (be it ganyu, business, or wage labour) as forced by, and thus as sign of, deprivation. Meanwhile, a man’s material support to his sexual partner is considered obligatory, and thus irrespective of either his or her economic status.

Overall, this study shows that women’s choices concerning their sexual relationships usually have little to do with an acute need for direct support. Instead, their daily life choices in general – including those related to sexual interaction – are related to their attempts to assure or improve their vulnerable livelihoods. The relatively high degree of autonomy granted to women by matrilineal institutions is curtailed by their severe livelihood insecurity and the resultant dependence on support from others, including, but not restricted to, sexual partners. Their struggle for survival requires a constant juggling of diverse resources and a continuous readjustment of priorities to make the most of each situation. It is this judicious opportunism – the clever manoeuvring to keep open as many options as possible – that reveals women’s agency within the structural constraints they face.

It appears that the common depiction of poor women as powerless victims, forced by acute destitution to exchange sex for direct support, does not do justice to the everyday reality of southern Malawi. The implied expectation that women will readily switch to safe sexual practices when offered the means to generate an independent income fails to acknowledge the major role played by cultural conventions, the complexity of women’s economic survival strategies, and the agency that women exert in upholding and using to their advantage the prevalent gender norms.
Samenvatting (Dutch summary)

Het ‘transactionele seks paradigma’

Aan de hand van een Malawiaanse case study test dit boek de hypothese dat verbeterde bestaanszekerheid voor arme vrouwen er toe leidt dat zij veiligere seksuele keuzes maken. Deze hypothese komt voort uit de veronderstelling, met name gangbaar in de volksgezondheid- en ontwikkelingsliteratuur, dat armoede en genderongelijkheid vrouwen er toe drijven seksuele risico’s te nemen. Doorgaans wordt aangenomen dat afhankelijkheid van materiele steun van mannen de onderhandelingspositie van vrouwen met betrekking tot seks ondermijnt en hen er tegelijkertijd toe drijft om meerdere seksuele relaties aan te gaan, waardoor zij een verhoogd risico lopen op HIV-besmetting. Om de neerwaartse spiraal van armoede en AIDS te doorbreken, zo bepleiten veel rapporten, is economische empowerment van vrouwen essentieel omdat daarmee de oorzaak van riskante ‘overlevingsseks’ zou worden weggenomen. Omdat deze redenering zo wijdverspreid is en onbetwist blijft in veel van de literatuur spreek ik hier van het ‘transactionele seks paradigma’.

Armoede en AIDS in Malawi

Zowel armoede als HIV-besettingspercentages zijn uitzonderlijk hoog in Malawi. Beide pieken in de zuidelijke regio en stijgen op het platteland. Ik verwachtte daarom dat een mogelijke verband tussen de twee hier het meest geprononceerd en waarneembaar zou zijn en koos voor een dorpsgemeenschap in zuidelijk Malawi als lokatie voor deze studie. Intrigerend genoeg zijn de meeste dorpsgemeenschappen in deze regio matrilineair en matrilokaal georganiseerd. Dit betekent dat het de vrouwen zijn die landrechten hebben en in de buurt van hun (moeder’s) familie blijven wonen. Een man voegt zich bij zijn echtgenote en wordt verwacht te helpen bij het bewerken van haar land en het bouwen van een huis dat haar eigendom blijft in het geval van scheiding. Verschillende studies hebben aangetoond dat, als gevolg hiervan, de bestaanszekerheid van deze vrouwen over het algemeen groter is dan die van andere plattelandsvrouwen in Malawi. Met andere woorden, dit specifieke gebied, dat ik selecteerde vanwege de extreem hoge voedselonzekerheid en HIV-besettingspercentages – wat volgens het transactionele seks paradigma een laag sociaal-economische status van vrouwen ten opzichte van mannen zou voorspellen – lijkt juist een redelijk gunstige omgeving voor vrouwen. De relatief goede sociaal-economische positie van deze vrouwen maakt hen interessant voor deze studie, aangezien een analyse van hun seksuele keuzes licht kan werpen op de hypothetische impact van economische empowerment van vrouwen op HIV-verspreiding.

1 Met ‘paradigma’ bedoel ik een denkpatroon van veronderstellingen, concepten en waarden waarmee een bepaalde kwestie bezien, geïnterpreteerd en geanalyseerd wordt, en dat zelf niet ter discussie wordt gesteld.
Dataverzameling
De data waarop deze studie bouwt, zijn grotendeels etnografisch van aard en verzameld gedurende een eenjarig verblijf in de onderzoeksgemeenschap tussen augustus 2008 en juli 2009. De onderzoeksgegevens zijn vergaard door mijzelf – een Nederlandse vrouw opgeleid als cultureel antropoloog die de meest gesproken taal van het gebied redelijk beheerst – met de onmisbare hulp van mijn onderzoeksassistent – een Malawiaanse vrouw met middelbare school opleiding die niet afkomstig is uit het onderzoeksdistrict maar beide talen die er gesproken worden wel vloeiend spreekt. De informele onderzoeksbenadering werd gefaciliteerd door dagelijkse spontane bijeenkomsten voor ons huisje van dorpsvrouwen die, net als ik, wilden leren breien van mijn onderzoeksassistent, onderwijl kletsend met elkaar en ons. Verder interviewden we alle negentig dorpsvrouwen meerdere malen, hielden vier dorpsvrouwen financiële dagboeken voor mij bij, interviewden we dertig vrouwen met een eigen handeltje op één van de markten nabij het onderzoeksdorp en verzamelden we geboortestatistieken bij de twee klinieken in de omgeving.

“Balancing men, morals and money”
Hoewel de dorpsbewoners zich terdege bewust zijn van HIV en mogelijke preventiemethoden, worden partners vaak snel gewisseld, overlappen veel relaties en blijft condoomgebruik minimaal. Bovendien accepteren de dorpsvrouwen geregeld aanbiedingen van mannen wier seksuele en gezondheidsinhouden hen onbekend zijn, wat hun risico op HIV-besmetting verder vergroot. In dit boek worden deze riskante seksuele keuzes verklaard middels het ontrafelen van de onderling gerelateerde historische, culturele en materiële factoren die van invloed zijn op de dagelijkse besluitvorming van vrouwen. Op basis van de verworven inzichten stel ik dat het transactionele seks paradigma belangrijke culturele en sociaal-economische aspecten van de seksuele besluitvorming van vrouwen over het hoofd ziet. Mijn data bevestigen weliswaar de veronderstelling dat behoefte aan (materiële) steun een rol speelt in de gretigheid waarmee veel vrouwen seksuele aanbiedingen accepteren, maar tonen ook aan dat de relatie tussen bestaanszekerheid en onveilige seksuele keuzes gecompliceerder en minder rechtstreeks is dan meestal wordt aangenomen. De erbarmelijke leveromstandigheden en pogingen deze het hoofd te bieden doordringen elke vezel van het dagelijkse leven. Bestaanszekerheid voor de dorpelingen staat en valt bij het kunnen mobiliseren van voldoende hulp ten tijden van nood. Het is veel meer dit belang van het creëren en behouden van toegang tot diverse potentiële hulpbronnen dan acute armoede an sich die ten grondslag ligt aan veel van de dagelijkse keuzes van vrouwen. Door het hele boek heen komt naar voren hoe vrouwen tactisch navigeren tussen de verschillende, soms conflicterende, potentiële hulpbronnen om zo hun toegang er toe te maximaliseren.
Seksuele relaties

Seksuele relaties blijken bij uitstek geschikt als hulpbron omdat het traditionele verwachtingspatroon voorschrijft dat een man zijn echtgenote moet voorzien van alle huishoudelijke behoeften buiten het door haar verbouwde voedsel om. Vrouwen hebben dus recht om financieel onderhouden te worden door hun seksuele partner en zijn zodoende gerechtvaardigd om dit van hem te claimen. Directe steun van een partner is echter niet de enige reden voor vrouwen om seksuele relaties aan te gaan. Een relatie brengt vrouwen ook een respectabele status, wat nodig is om hulp te kunnen ontvangen uit de wijdere gemeenschap. Voor veel dorpsvrouwen blijkt dit een belangrijke reden om een relatie aan te gaan of aan te houden, ook wanneer ze weinig tot geen directe steun ontvangen van de partner in kwestie. Aanvullende redenen zijn de verlangens naar affectie, seksuele bevrediging en kinderen, en het profiteren van de andere taken voorbehalten aan mannen naast inkomstengenerering. Gezien het grote belang dat vrouwen hechten aan het diversificeren van hulpbronnen is het waarschijnlijk dat seksuele relaties een belangrijk onderdeel blijven van hun overlevingstactiek, ook wanneer andere inkomstenbronnen voor hen beschikbaar zouden worden gemaakt.

Inkomstengenerering

De veronderstelling dat toegang tot inkomstengenerering de seksuele besluitvorming van vrouwen zou beïnvloeden wordt tevens betwist door onze bevindingen omtrent de middelen voor vrouwen om zelfstandig geld te verdienen. In tegenstelling tot de algemene aanname beschikken de dorpsvrouwen wel degelijk over manieren om zelfstandig geld te genereren en maken zij hier geregeld gebruik van. Deze middelen brengen echter niet de verbetering in bestaanszekerheid die pleitbezorgers van economische empowerment voor vrouwen doorgaans verwachten. Wanneer een vrouw zich bezighoudt met inkomstengenerering kan dat namelijk haar toegang tot andere hulpbronnen blokkeren. Inkomstengenerering wordt cultureel gezien als specifieke taak van mannen, en daarom in principe als onnodig en ongepast voor vrouwen. Vanwege de sterke associatie van geld met mannen worden vrouwen met eigen inkomsten er vaak van verdacht hun rijkdom te verkrijgen door clandestiene seksuele relaties. Het onafhankelijke inkomen van een vrouw kan bovendien door echtgenoten en andere dorpsbewoners gebruikt worden als rechtvaardiging om haar van hulp te onthouden, omdat ze het niet nodig zou hebben. Tegelijkertijd kan het feit dat een vrouw zich ‘verlaagt’ tot inkomstengenerering geïnterpreteerd worden als een gebrek aan toegang tot hulpbronnen, wat het voor anderen onaantrekkelijk maakt om haar te helpen in tijden van nood aangezien ze niet in staat lijkt de hulp te reciproceren. Al met al bedreigt het zelfstandig genereren van geld door een vrouw haar huwelijk, haar respectabele imago en haar potentiële toegang tot aanvullende hulpbronnen. Het verkrijgen van steun van een echtgenoot is daarentegen in lijn met de heersende gendernormen en daarom het meest bevorderlijk voor de algehele bestaans-
zekerheid van vrouwen. Onder de huidige omstandigheden hebben vrouwen veel te winnen bij het in stand houden van dit genderpatroon, dat hen in staat stelt om de lastige taak van inkomstengenerering over te laten aan mannen, maar ondertussen wel de vruchten ervan op te eisen.

Concluderend
Terwijl Westerse analisten er vaak vanuit gaan dat seksueel-economische uitwisseling het gevolg is van diepe armoede die vrouwen geen andere keuze laat, hielden mijn informanten er een tegengestelde visie op na. Zij interpreteerden juist vaak niet-seksuele inkomstengenerering als veroorzaakt door, en dus teken van, ernstige armoede – met diverse negatieve gevolgen van dien. De gangbare voorstelling van arme Afrikaanse vrouwen als machteloze slachtoffers, door acute armoede gedwongen om seks te ruilen voor directe steun van een man doet geen recht aan de dagelijkse realiteit van zuidelijk Malawi. De verwachting dat een vrouw veiligere seksuele gewoontes aanneemt wanneer ze de mogelijkheid krijgt aangeboden om structureel een zelfstandig inkomen te genereren onderschat de kracht van culturele conventies, de complexiteit van de economische overlevingsstrategieën van vrouwen, en de pro-actieve rol van vrouwen bij het in stand houden en voor eigen voordeel inzetten van de heersende gendernormen.
This document contains field notes of the anthropological study that led to Janneke Verheijen’s PhD dissertation *Balancing men, morals and money: Women’s agency between HIV and security in a Malawi village* (2013). In this dissertation many references are made to the field notes through codes. These codes refer to the specific document (P2, P3 or P8) and the specific paragraph within these documents. P2 contains the field notes of research assistant Gertrude Finyiza. P3 and P8 contain the field notes of Janneke Verheijen.

As described in the dissertation, the field notes were initially handwritten by Verheijen and Finyiza, and later typed out by a Malawian woman hired for this job. The typed out notes were then entered into a computer programme for qualitative data analysis (Atlas.ti). The paragraphs of the field notes were numbered by this software (explaining the sometimes strange numbering).

All documents contain the raw material — no editing of the field notes has been done accept for a replacement of all names (of both persons and places) by pseudonyms, abbreviations, or XXX. Most person pseudonyms consist merely of first names, even though in reality women are generally addressed as “(grand)mother of” followed by one of their (grand)children’s names, or by the name of their father or then-husband. By which name they are addressed or talked about can vary per occasion. For readability, all these varying references were replaced by a fixed pseudonym for each woman.

**Clarification P2:**
P2 contains the field notes that were written by Verheijen’s Malawian research assistant Gertrude Finyiza (see Chapter 4 for more information). Finyiza took over the data collection when Verheijen was not in the field, describing whatever occurred in the village and occasionally doing interviews. After Verheijen returned to the field, Finyiza’s notes were read and elaborately discussed. Between square brackets Verheijen has here and there added comments resulting from these discussions. Finyiza was encouraged to write down conversations she had as much as possible in the original words and formulations, hence in ChiChewa. For readability, her translations of these have later been added in red.
Glossary of frequently used ChiChewa word:

Chibwenzi = Boyfriend/girlfriend
Chitenje = Multifunctional piece of cloth that women wear over their skirts, carry their babies in on their backs, sleep on and/or under at night.
CUMO = Microfinance institute in Malawi, established by Concern Universal
Dotta = Gertrude’s English spelling of ‘daughter’
Ganyu = Piece work
Kachasu = Locally brewed gin
Kanyenya = Dried fish fried in maize flour Mandasi = snack (fried flour cake)
MASAF = Malawi Social Action Fund
Masamba = Green leafs for relish
Matemba = Dried fish
Ndiwo = Relish
Ngaiwa = Flour made of maize husks
Nkhokwe = Maize granary
Nsima = Thick maize porridge (the staple food)
Thobwa = Maize flour drink/gruel
Ufa = Maize flour
Ufa woyera = White maize flour
Usipa = Small dried fish
Zibwenzi = Boyfriends/girlfriends
Zigumu = Maize flour cakes
Zitenje = Plural of chitenje
Zitumbuwa = Maize flour cakes with banana

Glossary of frequently used abbreviations:

BS = business
DIL = daughter-in-law
GVH = group village head (the head of a group of villages which all have their own village head)
HH = household
MIL = mother-in-law
MK = Malawi Kwacha (national currency, at the time of the research 100MK = 0.5 Euro)
SA = South Africa
VH = village head/chief
Sept 12, 2008

Wife to chief Mudzi A came saying that the GVH is not participating in any club or activity done by PROSCAP or FIDP.

GVH told the chief Mudzi A to come and sleep on the veranda (khonde) to guard the house, then I said “No, I am not afraid to sleep alone in this house,” then the chief agreed to go back to his house.

Sept 13 - there was rainfall

GVH gave me 6 mango’s.

Three girls came by & they were discussing about their vlg eg Ndibwino kukhala ndi chibwenzi mudzi wina osati kukuno [It is better to have a boyfriend in another vlg, not here: grew up here together, in this vlg boys are like brothers] & they were asking one another saying that it’s good to get marriage rather than staying with my brother. This girl is known as Doris. She is staying with her brother bcoz their parents died [mother died when Doris < 1 year, sister of mother Rashida took care of Doris, but Doris kicked Rashida out of (mother’s) house now], Doris is 14 yrs old. Her brother is receiving K1500 every months from Orphan Care, with the money he built a house and taking care of Doris, his sister. Then Jane [g’daughter GVH], a friend to Doris, was complaining [to me] saying that: Doris is having a boyfriend at [small crossroads market] & M. village vlg. One day the brother of Doris told her to go & buy ndiwo at [small crossroads market] around 5 o’clock but she came back at 7 PM. Jane her friend was not happy. Ndinacheza ndi Doris pa Sept 13 kumufunsa za vuto lake ndipo anati ndinasiya school St5 [I was chatting with Estere on sept13 and I asked her about her problem and she said that she stopped going to school when she was in std 5] because there is no benefit & more girls in Mudzi B are just staying without going to school (laughing). Eg there is a certain girl who is 15 yrs in Mudzi B, she left school when she was in ST5 (12 yrs) but as of now she is married ndipo ine ndili ndi zaka 14, nditha kwatira [and I am 14years old, I can get married] “no difference between those who do & don’t go. Those who marry/My friends who are married stay good.” Doris was also telling her friends on the veranda (khonde) that “my boyfriend has got a cellphone.” [others later told G that she borrowed cellphone from someone in Mudzi B to call a boyfriend in Lilongwe. Brother of Doris lives in Area 49, perhaps she stayed with him for some time and found boyfriend then]. They departed at 5 PM. [While chatting with G, Jane and Dorica, Doris went to chat with all boys passing by. This was also a complaint after people went to GVH to tel about Doris’s threatening letter to Naima]

Doris amakhala panyakha yosamaliza [stays in uncompleted house eg no roof], the house that is made without bricks/the nice house nearby.

Sept 16
I was knitting on the veranda then a certain girl [g’ daughter Magda] came from where
they sell beer (Kachasu) (traditionally distilled beer) & I asked her about the owner of this house.
Then the girl said that he went to South Africa but the wife was staying here alone. Then one day a
certain woman from another vlg went to GVH as het mother-in-law they were chatting under the
mango tree. As
they were chatting the woman of this house heard from other people who were just passing by,
saying that: “have you seen the woman who is chatting with GVH? She is a second wife to
your husband.”Then the woman went there to beat the GVH & the second wife GVH says
however that she chased/addressed the woman because she was having several zibwenzi
[boyfriends] and that’s why her daughter-in-law beat her]. After that she packed her things and
went to saty with her mother, but the marriage ended. The girl continues saying that the owner of
this house have got several wives, and more children with different mother [all in other villages].
And in
2007 the man was suffering with ghonolia (transmitted disease). [Girl continues saying that
her own father did same behavior, having several wives, died now. Mother remarried in Lilongwe,
staying there with 2 of her children. Father was son of GVH. Mother daughter Magda].

Za Boma radio program (local news radio program): In Dedza there was a certain man who
was ugly and it was difficult for him to propose a woman, then he decided to go to the
traditional
doctor, so that he can be helped. Then the doctor [eerste dagen dacht G blijkbaar dat enige
interessante wat er te vermelden was, deze radio programma;sd waren, moest er nog
inkomen…] told him that he should go and sleep with her sister, when he went back home
he talked to her sister but she refused then her sister shouted as the
result the man is now
mad
(misala) because he didn’t manage to do what he was told by T. doctor.

Sept 17

People in Mudzi A II are getting worried because thieves have already started stealing eg they
goes to a certain house at 10 PM then instead of stealing maize in nkhowwe [maize granary] they just took
2 chickens & broke all the eggs. The chickens were staying in nkhowwe at night, then the same
night they went to another house and started knocking at the window but the dogs heard them,
then chased them up to the graveyard (manda). The thieves disappeared.

One pawpaw from Chenawe. From Eveles 2 mangoes, 1 pawpaw & 3 eggs.

Hamra says she didn’t receive coupon last year because makuponachepa anthu ena simulandira,
(because the coupons are few that means other people will not receive)
mulandira chimanga cha mbewa,(you will just receive maize seed for planting) promised
GVH… Says spends half time ganyu (casual labour), half on own field = kuganyu ½ kumunda
kwamganso ½. (working in other peoples field half then working another half in my field/casual
labour)

RADIO PROGRAM (7:30 PM)

1. Bangwe in Blantyre: Bambo wina wachita manyazi Banja lake litatha anagana
zogawana katundu (a certain man was a shamed when his marriage ended, and he decided to share his property) but
the problem was that, they were using 1 toilet then he decided to
fill theToilet with more bricks inordr to be full quickly and many people laughed at him.
2. Nyau (masquerade): amavina mochititsa chidwi Ku Ntcheu (was dancing attractively at ntcheu and) (many people were interested) ndipo analandira Mphatso ya Ndalama (and they received a gift of money), after receiving that money he begged a car drive up to the Market buying Zitumbuwa (local pan cakes made from maize flour). More people showed appreciation (kuyamikira) by saying that (Anthu ena amagwilira [rape] ana[other people rape young children], akazi akamadutsa kumanda) (and also women when they pass by a grave yard) but this is a nice (Nyau) (miscarried) because he know how to drive a car.

18th September

Kukasungu (one of the district in the central Malawi) there is a certain woman who is HIV positive but she proposed a man who is a Fisher man then the man agreed anthu atawaona akuyenda limodzi anati: (but when other people saw them they said that) mkazi uyu amgwiritsa ntchito traditional medicine akamafunsira azibambo chifukwa “Fisher man wathetsa banja lake” (this woman uses traditional medicine when proposing men because that fisherman has ended his marriage because of her) [People explain this by assuming that she must have used traditional medicine to attract men because 1) it is unusual that women propose to men, should be other way around, 2) the fisherman knew the woman is HIV positive yet divorced his wife to marry her.]
On the way back home people were also saying that this girl Doris used to eat Nsima at [nearest trading center] Restaurant but we don’t know where she get the money because she is not working.

[Doris is 14 years old who lives in a nice house where Rashida used to live is Daughter of deceased Sister of Rashida. next day at Borehole women pointed at Doris to others who didn’t attended this happening s, this was Thursday [Gertrude saw her on Friday last.]

19th September, 2008.

RADIO PROGRAMME ZAMABOMA*** OF THE DISTRICT***

1. Sing’anga (Traditional doctor) Kunabwera Amayi ena amafuna mankwala kuti abereke mwana ndiye Sing’anga nawa uza kuti (acertain woman came looking for traditional medicine so that she can bare children(was barren) then the traditional doctor told her that lets) lets g to the bush to fetch some medicine, but you should be naked and I will also be naked if not then the medicine will not work in your body. the woman agreed but on the way boys who were herding cattle in the bush (oweta ng’ombe) saw them & shouted (Panopa Amfumu awathamangitsa [chased] asing’angawo) (as of now the chief has chased the traditional doctor)]. [Walking naked is not showing respect to the village.]

On 19th September I went to attend the funeral I Mudzi B village near the group village (House) the young boy of 6 years died on September but the burial took place on 19th September.

The parents of the boy said they went to the field with the boy in the morning and they came back at around 11:30 am then the boy told her Mother that “I want to go to Mangochi to see my grand Mother, but before going there I would like to eat a chicken, then the mother agreed. After 10 minutes the boy felled down then her Mother asked him (what’s the problem? But the boy failed to respond. The Mother run to the Grocery to Buy painkillers but when she was coming back she found a boy already dead. They borrowed a bicycle and went to [nearest trading center] Hospital but they were told tat a boy is already dead then on the same day; the father of the son started speaking loudly: I will go to the traditional doctor in another village and he was told that there was someone else who has bewitched your Son, but if you want to revenge am ready to help you ad the father of the son told the traditional Doctor that I welcome when I have the money.

Conclusion not known.

Sept 20, 2009

On 20th September I went to Church and it is after Mr. Chikombo’s House (Thanthwe Seventh Day Church) they were about 27 people in the Church. The service started at 10:00am and ended
at 12: 15. On the way back home, I was coming with Joyce (Mudzi A II) and we met with a husband her first Husband then the man started saying that I am back from Lilongwe want to take all the Children, and Joyce said that we should go and discuss with my Grand mother cause am married with another man. If people see you they will go and tell my second husband that am charting with you on the road.”I left them going to Mudzi A II)

[Man said Come to Lilongwe with me again because I have no one to cook for me there people are cheating you here, saying that I’m married to another, is not true. Joyce said she had heard his new wife has 4 children and with her own 2 would ad up to 6.. (Sunday 28 September: In Mudzi A II we hear that Joyce has gone to Lilongwe again).]

Sunday 21 September.

Made Small garden (spinach, Tomatoes, Pumpkin) Afraid that chicken may destroy, so only Small trial now. 6 children agreed, Water twice a day ½ bucket, pitched firewood, about 10 mm wall (after field of)

Monday 22 September.

Washed clothes, draw water, cooked beans.

On 28 September Sunday,

I was knitting in the afternoon, but no-one came, tried to find out what made them busy but I didn’t find. There was no-one else who was passing by.

29 September Monday,

I went for HH interviews in the morning. then in the afternoon was knitting pakhonde (on the veranda) then daughter to GVH came she was saying that she has failed to go to Balaka because the house they were staying costs 2000 and know raised to K 3000 and she asked
me if possible I should interview her. Her Mother called her all the way from Balaka to register. Then I said no problem I will register [but didn’t come].

On the same day Mother to Innocent came, she was asking where you [Janneke] have gone and I said Lilongwe then she started laughing that “I saw her with something carrying on her head going to draw some water. Does it mean that she want to learn what people in the Village do?” then I said yes. she also continued saying that “one day I will take her to fetch some firewood” then I said no problem she will be happy. on the same day Innocent came and I said where were you yesterday then she was saying that we went to Balaka to wrote examination at our Church concerning, translating Arabic to Yao then we went there to hear the results.

This happens every year, Innocent continued after passing the examination every mosque receives a gift e.g they sent 50 Bucket to each mosque, but here in Mangochi people were already quarrelling instead of giving us “Free of Charge “ we were buying at K 200 each bucket last year people received biycles, clothes. They just sent this to every mosque because hey were just quarrelling, fighting, because they were a lot of people gathered.

30th September Afternoon
Back
I was knitting on the Veranda then Livia came and told her to come because I was going to fetch firewood. When I came back the Chief Mudzi B came to tell me that there is a funeral at Musitafa Family Daughter of Musitafa ( one who was pregnant) gave birth to a baby girl on 26th September at [nearest tradingcenter] Hospital when they came back from the Hospital they just stayed 2days from 28th Sept- 30 Sept. then the baby died at around 3.I went there with Livia to attend the funeral at the funeral people were asking me that (is that true that you want to distribute maize in our Villages I said No. Then they continued saying that: we know that we are going to receive something because on the interview you asked how many people stay in each household. Then I continued telling them that no benefit, we are just researching. And they were are also telling me that most people didn’t come to attend the funeral because “Mrs Musitafa has never attended funeral in this vlq. She used to go to Balaka for tailoring.” That means people were revenging. We went to the graveyard very late around 5.30PM. But only men entered kumanda [at the graveyard]. People were not singing they were just making noise, discussing that “there are many witchcraft (afiti) in this 2 villages (Mudzi A & Mudzi B) after everything we came back home around 6.15PM.

Oct 7
Back
On 3th Oct I went to Lilongwe and I came back on 7 October 2008 at 4:29 afternoon. When I came
here in Mudzi B I just started cleaning the house putting everything in order & fetched some water.

Oct 8
In the morning I went to fetch some water at the borehole, then I saw HB of Emra working in the field alone (making ridges) and the wife was at home.

At the borehole again I met Chisoni drawing some water (for watering at dimba) (garden).

At 10 AM I went to distribute pictures in Mudzi B, when I reached at Innocent’s house I gave them a picture for the HB (grocery) then I found her mother making zigumu (maize flour cakes) and she said that I started on 6th Oct 2008 but am selling here at home K10 or K5 each.

They were also saying that Charles Msako (famous singer in Balaka) is preparing a place near [nearest primary school] to open a bottle store (bar) and they advertised that girls who want to be working there can go and register their names.

In the afternoon I was knitting then I saw few people gathered at GVH (tree). I went there to find out what is happening then they said that they were told to meet there for the conclusion of the story of Doris [would not have been very appropriate for me to join in?] but relatives of Doris said that they don’t want GVH to end their story because she is not the elder one, but they want sub TA [small crossroads market], so that Doris could be punished seriously, in order to stop her behavior. Then the GVH told the people to go back to their houses. They will arrange another day.

When I came back home I continued knitting then Livia joined me & she was saying that on 6th Oct people started working at MASAF project. She said that: they were told to select 2 people each group village eg GVH selected 5 people (but her relatives) eg Kingsley (g’son of 14 yrs) her brother from J. village, chief Mudzi B (they are related), and g’daughter. Most of the people complained that they were expecting to get fertilizer through the project but they failed. [Chief Mudzi A watched over equipment + GVH brought water to workers both received money for this. Included chief, mother of Ada, Venesi.]

After Livia, then Chisoni came then we saw daughter-in-law of chief Mudzi A passing by: then Esnart said that the son of Hamra married Filimona who have got 2 children from another HB [which Filimona did not mention in interview].

Chisoni was also saying that she finished working on her field on 5th Oct and now she is just staying.

Then mother of Livia [Phingi] came, she was complaining that Fatima is a thief. One day the chickens of Phingi was playing at Fatima’s house, but in the evening the 2 chickens didn’t went back. Then Phingi went there to ask for her chickens, but Fatima said that: I didn’t see the chickens playing around (but granddaughter of Phingi is the one who saw Fatima carrying chickens in the morning when she was going to the field at M. village, but she came back empty handed without chicks, said Phingi telling me. Phingi continued saying that even last year she was just stealing chickens going to keep at M. village where her mother is staying. [Also killed a pigeon of Phingi who came to eat from her drying maize. Instead of chasing it, threw stone and killed
After knitting I started watering my garden.

Oct 9
0087 In the morning I was going to distribute pictures in Mudzi A II. On way I saw Thokozani working alone on the field at Mudzi A, she was making ridges. On the way again I saw Dorica and her mother coming back from the field. When I reached Mudzi A II I distributed all the pictures but I failed to interview mother of Victoria bcoz she was not there. She went to the field.

0088 On the way back home I met with wife of chief (Hamra) selling some tomatoes, I bought some tomatoes & I asked who is the owner of the BS & she said that: “it’s for my daughter-in-law” am just helping her. She also continues saying that she grow tomatoes on her dambo at Nk. village and as of now my son is just taking some tomatoes from their field selling at Liwonde market while her wife is selling at home.

In the afternoon I was knitting, then Chisoni, Innocent and Ada joined me and they were discussing that the MASAF project want some people again. 20 People are not enough, there is a lot of work to do, said Chisoni.

0090 Then Innocent [also uses field of sister who stays in Zomba] continued saying that: I have got a field, of someone else is looking for a field to rent he/she can pay K1,800. Then the HB of Thokozani came he said that if I will have enough money I will pay. As we were knitting Mr Chikombo came and he said that he was asked by DADO & AEDC about the report of what we’re doing here. Then I told him to tell them that Janneke is not here but when she will be back I will explain and she will see what to do. And he continued saying that “can’t you just write in briefly?” Then I said no, just wait because I don’t know if it is necessary to write a report. Then he went back.

After knitting around 5:30 I started watering my garden.

Oct 10
0093 In the morning I was going to Mudzi A II to meet with the mother of Victoria (Yona, young sister to Fiona) then on the way I saw HB of Jasmine clearing his field by burning.

On the way back home I saw HB of Nyamwale making ridges alone in the field near Mudzi A II.

In the afternoon (after lunch) I went to fetch some water at mjigo [water pump] the on the way I passed by Kingsley with his 3 friends under a mango tree, Kingsley was telling his friends that : my girlfriend has already started begging me some money to buy kanyenya [snack], maybe because I have started working at MASAF (then the other boys were just laughing).

When I started knitting pa khonde (on the veranda) Chisoni joined me & she started saying that: This MASAF project makes people not to work in the field bcoz they get up early in the morning to work in the road (clearing the road) then when they go back home they used to be tired (laughed).

As we were knitting Jasmine passed by & she told me that Innocent is sick (teeth) then I went there to see her. She told me that she were to Balaka Hospital & she was treated (doctor removed the
teeth) then she is now getting better.

In the evening around 6:50PM the GVH came to chart with me and she was complaining that her HB is not feeling good, they went to the hospital at [nearest trading center] treated but not changing. She also continued saying that: “The goodness is that we’re 2 wives and as of now he went to stay with another wife. It’s now 5 days on 6-10 Oct I was also sleeping there helping one another taking care of the HB because it is now becoming worse. She also continues saying that Jane was watering at your garden when you where not here, then I said thanks a lot for helping me. After few minutes the GVH went back.

Oct 11

In the morning I started working on my garden because chickens destroyed all my crops. After breakfast I went to fetch some firewood then on the way I saw GVH & g’daughter Jane working in the field (making ridges). On the way back I met with wife to the chief & daughter-in-law discussing that: It’s good to be boiling mangoes for lunch & nsima for dinner only.

After this I went to fetch some water the after lunch there was a heavy wind and some clouds, as if there will be rainfall but not the heavy wind continues up to 4 PM but when it stopped Mphatso (daughter Rosemary) and dotta of (related to Doris) came to join me knitting. As we were knitting Mphatso started saying that: those people who are working at MASAF wil be receiving K2,500 per month. But next week the MASAF wants to add a number of people, for the work to be done quickly but they will be receiving K200 per day she continued. Then Dorica also joined us. Dorica asked where is Doris nowadays? Then Mphatso said that she is busy with a certain man from [small crossroads market], then the girls shaked hands and laughed. Then Mphatso continues saying that one day a certain man called Doris, he told her that I have got K200, can I come and sleep at your house? Then Doris said that no problem but you should also bring some matemba (girls laughed) [True? Makes sense, says G, considering Doris’s behavior: staying alone, has several boyfriends for sure. G heard her speak about boyfriend in Lilongwe, started going to CCAP bcoz someone there proposed to her, wanted to join choir so he could see her working hard]. Then the daughter of (related to Doris) answered saying that let’s wait for the day of the conclusion of the story at [small crossroads market] (all girls laughed). The other girl continued saying that tomorrow there is a netball match against … vlg but it’s good to put on short skirts so that people should see our legs (all girls laughed). It was around 5:45PM all girls departed and I promised to watch them when they will be playing netball (they all agreed after that I started watering my garden).

Oct 12

In the morning I was watering my garden then Livia came she was saying that “sorry I didn’t come yesterday because I was busy cleaning tins for making zigumu (maize flour cakes).” Then Venesi came, she was saying that: I have heard some people that you know how to knit. Then I would like to come and learn how to make a poncho & a jersey for my baby. Then I said no problem you can come.

Mr Ntawanga also came the same morning, he was saying that “thanks a lot for helping them at the funeral, they are relatives” & he continued that she was suffering from headache but they don’t believe it! Because the cloth that they wrapped the dead body was full of blood. So it was difficult to
After lunch Venesi came and joined me in knitting. I taught her how to make a poncho, then she managed the same day. She was also saying that: People in this village (women) are not serious in learning something, they are just staying, saying that we cannot manage knitting (without coming to try) (we laughed). She also continued saying that: At Adult School most women used to chat only but not listening to what the teacher is teaching them. Most of the people are coming in order to be involved in loan, but not serious to learn how to read & write. She was also saying that: I have stopped taking loan now, because in my BS am not getting any profit. And the “loan people” went to someone else who failed to pay back the loan of K3000, they took a bicycle and plates, and he was told that he will receive his things after paying back the loan.

Innocent joined us & she was saying that after selling cotton next year she will start a BS of knitting then selling. Venesi also said that “I will buy thread and I will make a nice jersey for my daughter” (we all laughed). Innocent also continued saying that it’s good to be coming here to knit rather than just moving around (kuyendayenda) with boys or men because there is a benefit in knitting if you put much attention. At 5:20PM they all departed.

Oct 13

In the morning I went for interviews in Mudzi B II & on the way I met with Venesi. And she was complaining that: I am used to be tired everyday because early in the morning am going to work at MASAF, in the afternoon teaching at Adult School, in the late afternoon I work in my field.

On the way with Ainessi and her HB coming back from the field. And I saw mother of chief Mudzi B making ridges alone in the field and near the borehole I saw Lovely making ridges alone in the field.

Firstly I distributed soap & salt to those people whom I interviewed first. And I asked Mwayi if the child is hers but she said no am just helping my elder sister to take care of him. Then after that I interviewed Lizzie.

After the interviews Alma asked me that: Do you mean that you will not help us in anything? Then I said no we are just doing research. Then she continued saying that are you married? Then I said no I will get married later (she laughed). Then she continued saying that 1 of the granddaughters who were staying here was staying at [nearest tradingcenter] but her father said that I should be staying with his dota here in Mudzi B, so that she can go further with education because their house in near a market ([nearest tradingcenter]) and bottle store, then he was afraid that she cannot continue school by copying other behavior from the market/bottle store. Then Alma continued saying that let me call her (granddaughter) so that you can encourage her to work hard in school, in order to be like you. Then I agreed. When her granddota came I just told her that she must work hard in school and don’t allow any boy to disturb her because she is still young then she agreed. Lastly her grandmother was happy and we departed.

After that Lizzie escorted me up to the borehole. On the way she was saying that Charles Msako (famous singer wants to open a bottle store) but am not happy because most of the families will be destroyed. For example men will be going there to drink beer & there will be more girls from
different villages working there in order to attract customers by putting on short skirts or dancing
different styles (we laughed). And the men will be attracted because their wives, maybe they don’t
know how to dance (we also laughed). She continued by saying that: last year certain people from
social welfare same, they told me to find out (write names) for the orphans in Mudzi B village but
many people registered 3-4 children in the family but not orphans. Many people it is difficult to
understand because they didn't go far with education. She also continued by asking me that: So
people understand that you are just doing research, then I said no! It is difficult for them to
understand. We all laughed & separated.

0113 In the afternoon I went to fetch some water for my garden. Then after that I started knitting but no
one else joined me.

Oct 14

0115 In the morning after breakfast I started washing the clothes, after that I went to fetch some water for
my garden. Then at the borehole I met with Livia & she was saying that sorry I didn’t come to knit
yesterday because I went to Balaka to attend Madras at the mosque (tailoring). They told us that we
will receive a machine next months. Then we departed.

0116 After lunch chief Mudzi A came to greet me, he was saying that nowadays “am not coming to see
you because am busy at MASAF project. I am looking after the equipment that people are using
(guarding) after the project I will receive something. He also continued saying that: as of now I have
not yet started working on my field because there is still time (we all laughed). He also continued by
saying that after 2 wks the MASAF people will employ many people to work, fr it to be done quickly
before the rain starts.

0117 After the chief went I started knitting, then Magda was passing by, she was saying that I have
started working at [nearest primary school] school in writing names for those people who want to vote at the
upcoming elections.

0118 As I was knitting Livia, Lizzie, Dorica, Grace, Ada joined me. They all said that
they want to be like Venesi who pays attention when someone is knitting (we all laughed).
All the women mentioned what they wanted to learn, then I agreed. As we agreed Grace said
that “u should make a jersey for my dotta, I have already discussed with my HB.” Then I said no
problem I will make it for you. She also continued that: My HB told me that if I will manage to knit he
will give me some money to buy my own thread to make something for my dotta (we all laughed).
[She is still in contact with her HB over telephone, but she didn’t tell him that she was going to
Mzuzu. Livia said Grace got soap & bread]. Then Lizzie said that, when my HB sends
money from SA I will also buy thread to make a big poncho. Then Grace also continued sayin
that Ada have you remembered that you got pregnant when you was going to the tailor to
make your school uniform? Then you were just cheating your mother that “I am going to take my
school uniform” while you wanted to meet with your boyfriend (we all laughed). Grace
continued saying that: As of now you learnt a lesson by having unexpected baby, not so? And you are
lucky now that you have decided to come & start learning knitting so that you can make something
for your baby! (all laughed). And Dorica continued saying that Naima was fighting with her mother
because of money. But I don’t know what happened with the money (said Dorica).
At the end Jasmine came, she was saying that I have started selling zigumu (maize flour cakes) where MASAF people are working. I am selling all the zigumu in short period of time. At the end all the girls were happy and we were just laughing if someone is making mistakes when knitting & they promised to come the other day. Then I just thanked them for joining me in knitting.

Oct 15

In the morning after breakfast I went to fetch some water then at the borehole I met with Chisoni & she was saying that "I failed to come on the 13th Oct because I went somewhere else for ganyu (casual labour) in order to buy ndiwo (relish) and soap" (but she didn’t mention the place). After the borehole I went to fetch some firewood, on the way I saw HB of Jasmine making ridges alone in the field. After that I started knitting till lunch hour.

After lunch I heard some people singing at Mudzi B football ground, then Livia came. She was saying that there is a meeting for the MP who wants to seat for elections at Balaka. Then we went there to see. At the meeting all the chiefs sat on the chairs (chiefs from nearest tradingcenter up to small crossroads market), 17 chiefs and many people from different villages gathered. After 30 minutes MO Msuweni from Balaka came with other 3 women and men. When people saw the car they started dancing (welcoming them) most of the people put on yellow T-shirts but at the meeting people started complaining that instead of chief Mudzi A to seat on the char, the GVH called her elder brother from M. village vg to be on behalf of chief Mudzi A. Then the master of ceremony called the group Mudzi B to stand up and say what people in her vg need, then she said that we want a playing ball for th boys of Mudzi B and the people laughed while others clapped hands. Then people from Balaka continued encouraging people to vote for Bakili Muluzi. At the end they called all the chiefs from all vlg’s to meet at GVH’s house and all the chiefs received some money there, said Chisoni [to vote for Muluzi]. From there they told all the people who gathered at the meeting to go at [small crossroads market] to receive something and people crapped hands [what? Probably money, is what Muluzi does for campaign, throwing money…].

As we were coming back from the meeting: Fatima was nearby and she started telling some people that “Livia stopped talking to us because she has learned how to knit different things.” Then Livia heard them talking & she stopped. Then Livia told Fatima that “we are not paying any money, and in the morning I used to work in my field then after lunch, instead of just moving around (kuyendayenda) I used to go there to learn what I want to know. Because through kuyendayenda I will get another baby then I am lucky because I am learning a lot of things that will help me. Fatima was ashamed and didn’t answer anything. On the way people were just singing different songs.

Oct 16

In the morning I went to help Innocent working on her field, then on the way we saw GVH and het g’children making ridges on the field, then I saw Dorica & her mother working in their field making ridges. Then as we were digging Innocent started saying that there is a certain man who is proposing me akuti akundifuna banja koma ineyo sindikufuna, (he is proposing for marriage but I don’t want) chifukwa ndazindikira kuti sibwino kuti ndikwantire ana anga asanakule, (because I have realized that it is not good to get married while my children are still young) komanso ndibwino ndidzakwatiere (a part from that it is good to get married after) after having everything eg plates,
pots, tins & enough blankets because when I married for the second time: mwamunayo anatenga chilichonse (and my ex-husband took everything), amachotsa tsiku lilionse chinthu chimodzi chimodzi (he was collecting one item a day) eg for the first day he took his radio, another day clothes, then plates & tins, a basin and after taking everything he said that he had another wife at [nearest trading center] and he went back to her. Then through this I have realized that I should buy my kitchen tools and I will get married after 3-4 years. Then she also continued that “when I realized that he is transferring his radio, clothes to another wife, I was refusing to have sex with him and he was becoming angry.” [agency! Weapon of weak! I was not able to find out about this through direct questions...]

When I came back from the field grandson of GVH came to put a new window flame. After that the old woman (mother chief Mudzi B) came, she was saying that: My friend Gertrude, there is a certain man who used to come at home to propose me, he says that he wants to marry me (she laughed) but I am old now, I cannot manage to draw some water for him to wash his body. I cannot also manage to wash his clothes & even at night I cannot manage to have sex with him bcoz I am now weak (we all laughed). And she continued saying that: I will refuse because since my first HB died I didn’t got married to any man. Then she also begged some salt & I gave her. She said that “am failing to eat porridge because of salt.”

In the afternoon I went to fetch some water, then at the borehole Mayi Musitafa was complaining to her friends that: I am now tired of working alone in the field, my HB is just busy making shoes. Although he is bringing some ndiwo (relish) but he needs to help me in the field, then the wife of chief Mudzi A said that: Amuna amasiku ano ndi choncho (those are the men of nowadays), people laughed.

From there I went to buy some tomatoes at Mudzi A (Hamra) then Jasmine called me, she was saying that I should greet her mother from [nearest primary school] vg. As we were charting mother to Jasmine said that: I have run away from my HB, he is just drinking beer for K500 a day. Doing ganyu (casual labour) in order to buy beer (kachasu). When I talked to him last wk he was sayin that “ndiwe olongola, ndikwantira mkazi wina [you are talkative, I will marry another woman] (we all laughed). She continued saying that I will stay here in Mudzi B for 1 wk [= punishment] then I will go back there (to him). As we were charting Jasmine said that “dzulo kumnsonkhano ndimasuka chifukwa GVH anapempha mpira wa anyamata ndi uniform ya mpira. M’malo mwa chimanga kuti anthu asamagone osadya nsima (yesterday I was laughing at the meeting because GVH requested for a football for boys and uniform [from Member of Parliament], instead of maize so that people do not have to go to bed hungry). We all laughed and I continued to buy tomatoes.

After lunch I continued knitting, then Grace, Lizzie & Livia joined me. Then everybody was happy that they managed to make shoes, and they started learning how to make a small jersey. As we were knitting Livia started complaining that: Fatima killer their goat in Feb this year by putting some poison in the water & her g’mother (of Livia) saw her. And she continued by saying that today (on 16th Oct) has killed a pigeon. Fatima was drying the ufa (maize flour) on the mat outside their house then a pigeon came playing around, but instead of chasing it accordingly, Fatima took a big stone and killed it. When she was doing it Phingi saw her, then she went there to ask what was wrong with the pigeon. Then the HB of Fatima told Phingi that “my wife is wrong, instead of chasing your pigeon she killed it with a big stone”. Then Phingi told the HB of Fatima that: Tell your wife to behave as if she was born in a woman like me, not from an animal.

After that Lizzie said that in the morning I received a call from a certain woman whom I don’t
know & she was telling me that I am foolish (chitsiru) (we all laughed). Then she continued saying that the cellphone is not good because it is encouraging problems, eg separations in families. Another example: During weekends most of the men used to move around (kuyendayenda) (with different women) through communication of cellphone, they can receive a call while the wife is there. But the man (HB) can just cheat you by saying that “I am going to the market to buy some nice ndiwo (relish)” while he is going to meet another wife (hule) (a prostitute)(we laughed).

After knitting, I went to fetch some water for my garden.

Oct 17

Early in the morning 4:45AM the GVH came knocking on the door - then I went outside to greet her but she had an angry face (kukwiya). After greeting her, she said that I saw you helping Innocent in the field, then in the afternoon I used to see many girls knitting at this house including Innocent. Then I would like to tell you about the behavior of these girls especially Innocent. She is a thief, she destroyed the family of my son who is in South Africa, and she destroyed the house of my grandson Kingsley, that’s why he is not staying in his house, she was stealing my maize. So you need to be careful because they will steal your properties here, don’t allow them to come here (the girls). If you don’t have anything else to do, just come at my home & we will be carting there. Am saying this because I am the owner of this house & you are in my hands. These girls have zibwenzi (boyfriends) (police men), they can hire them to steal here.

After that I told her that “thanks a lot for your advice” then she was just repeating the same words. When the GVH went back I started thinking that may be its jealousy she is thinking that we will give them something And I sated thinking that when I was in Lilongwe especially the year when I started staying with Desi people were saying that Desi is a prostitute don’t stay with her and some people were also telling Dourine that Gertrude is prostitute where is she getting the money to pay Rent & buy food but they were saying we were just staying up she got married.

Later on Innocent told me to go and take some fire wood on her field in the same morning then on the way Innocent said that I wanted to tell you Gertrude that the GVH stopped talking to me even when I greeted her. when she will be tired [of this]? and Innocent continued that last year 2007 some people from Balaka come at the mosque in Mudzi B & they were saying that they want pastor (sheikh) of that mosque should go and attend seminar after that they will receive something then the sheikh of Mudzi B mosque is my father (said Innocent but the GVH told the people from Balaka that I used to hire sheikh from [nearest tradingcenter] that I will just go my self to attend the seminar [and receive something].

When she went there she received k2000, a bicycle and a travelling bag but on the way back home thieves strong the bicycle (we all laughed)

After coming back home I didn’t tell Innocent what the GVH said about the girls I was afraid that people will stop coming here

Around 11:00am Kingsley come to put a plastic paper on the [roof of] kitchen when he finished I asked him to say the amount of money that I can pay then he said no.
After lunch I started knitting the Grace, Livia and Ada joined me then Grace said that now I am not happy because my HB not treating me as he was doing in the first days of marriage.

At first, he was just spending a week at Mangochi where he was doing a business (fish) but as of now he spends almost 2 weeks in Mangoci and not leaving enough money to use at home and I have now realize that its good to finish school first get employed or doing a big business an my own, not like this. As Grace was talking we heard a voice of old woman (mother to chief Mudzi B crying near by, I asked her what was the problem then she said that “ I have come to give you salt you gave me because the GVH saying that Why did you went there to beg salt without my permission? Do you think do you think Getrude and Janake are your parents? (said the GVH) then all the girls were just quite and hold her that take the salt and use it at home because we distribute the salt to every body in Mudzi B and Mudzi A except you. Then she went back but not happy (with a sad face).

Then Livia said that “That’s why most of the women in this village are failing to be coming her to chart with you. The I said that no problem, just continue coming here because this is a chance for you to learn more things.

Then Ada said that my HB is not coming back home but I think the problem is that we cannot manage to sleep together because my child is young. But although he went away may be to another wife but when she will also be pregnant and gave birth to a child he will also move to another wife later on he will have many wives later on he will die before 30 years (we all laughed)

After that Kingsley (Grand son of G-Mudzi B) came on the mat and he was saying that “Amzanga onse anakwatiwa inenso chaka cha mawa ndikwatiwa kuti ndipeze munthu wontungira madzi osamba” (all my friends got married, by next year I will also get married, so that I should have someone to be fetching some water for my bath) (we all laughed) he stayed only a few minutes and all the girls departed. After that I went to fetch some water for my garden.

18 OCTOBER

In the morning I waked up and I started preparing the journey to Church, then on the way I saw Thokozani and HB making ridges in their in their field in Mudzi A Village, then Doris was also working alone in the field making ridges, At the church I found my friends already starting the service. The one who was preaching was Ex-HB of Joyce, when he was preaching he used Luke 2 Vs 52 (It says Jesus increased in wisdom and stature and in favor of God and men and the Preacher concluded by saying that: Sometimes people who smoke Chamba [marihuana] they work hard in the field but sometimes not and he encouraged people by telling them that they should not drink beer or smoke.

And at the end he said that some members of the church must go to Charity for condolence, then they closed me, another woman and 1 man (3) and we discussed to go there at 2:00pm

I came back home for lunch at 1:30pm then I hired a bicycle and I paid K40.00. It was too hot then I failed at home. Levison HB of Thokozani came at home he said that “I want some water to drink, am tired because am coming back from Nt. village for Ganyu (Piece work) for making ridges and at 3 o’clock I want to go and work on my field. Ad he was talking (the phone for Levison started ringing) and he said that “I will not answer this call because this woman (the one who was calling) used to tell me to visit her everyday but she knows that am
married. One day I went there to hear what she was calling me for. And I told her to tell me what she wanted from me, then she said that “I want you to sleep with me (Marry me) without payments” No problem, Levison continued saying that the woman is older than me (6 years difference) “I refused to sleep with her” said Levison. I told here that am married and I can’t manage to take care of two wives. I laughed then he continued his journey.

Gertrude made shoes for Thokozani’s daughter and Levison paid. Thokozani came with cell phone to Gertrude asking her to explain how to answer a call. She wants to find but who is calling her HB when she was taking a bath. It is now 2:00pm and I decided to go to Charity to meet with church member for condolence when I reached there I found Charity, her mother, Alida, Saiba and young mother I stayed with them on the mat and Alida started saying that: a certain man from J. Village wants to divorce with his wife and they sold their field for K3, 000.00 and shared the money (we all laughed) and she continued by asking me “Is that true that you are distributing blankets and fertilizers then I said No. Then she continued by saying that we heard that yesterday you gave a certain old woman some blankets and clothes. Then I said no I just gave her salt because she didn’t receive anything when we distributing soap and salt (people laughed) and they continued by saying that: People in this village are gossipers because there were talking at the borehole about this.

A certain man was passing by Saiba said that, this man is Sandram (name) from M. village he have got 4 wives (most of the women used to allow him when proposed because he is handsome and he has a lot of money. During this hunger season he used to have more zibwenzi (boyfriends) in order to sleep with them and gave them some money to buy soap) we all laughed. Then Dorothy Wailes joined us and she started saying that Mpatso ali pachibwenzi ndi (is in relationship with) Alexander (HB to Emra) Dorothy continued by saying that, their relationship (Kondwani & Alexander) started last year and as of now Alexander says that he want to get married to a woman who will give birth and stay alive not just dying.

Then Charity said that “I went to M. village one day to see my friend and I slept there. But my friend said that “I used to sleep with 2-3 men per day! But there is no one else who asked me to sleep with him (we all laughed). Then at midnight she told me that “I am failing to sleep because of some feeling in my both maybe I should take a maize cob and help myself (said Charity) we all laughed for two minutes. As we were laughing members of the church were coming then we stopped.

When the members of the church come we started with a prayer, then at the church we contributed some money (K100.00) for condolence and basin of Ufa (maize flour). After the prayer we gave them what we brought. After that we departed and the members of the church told Charity and me to follow them. On the way they said that we wanted to know if Charity continued going to Seventh-day Adventist Church, then Charity said I will see because I was just following HB and now e divorced and my parents are Muslims. Then one of the members of the Church introduced himself to me by saying that I married Joyce then last month I went to attend the wedding ceremony in Blantyre when I was coming back from the wedding I didn’t found her the neighbours told me that she was going back to her Ex-HB in Lilongwe and he continued by saying that “she will remembers me, because I didn’t want to marry two wives but only one. And Charity answered by saying that the first HB of Joyce was not providing enough soap, salt and he also married another woman in Lilongwe.” As of now he called Joyce to join him in Lilongwe, we will see just soon she will be back here in BK (we all laughed and departed) on the way back home Charity escorted me & I asked her how she started the relationship with her Ex-HB and
she said that we met at School (St1, HB St2) and we started with Chibwenzi (relationship) and later on my mother said that she don’t have enough money to pay school fees and I stopped school. Then later I told my Chibwenzi (boyfriend) that I stopped school because of the money and she said that he will marry me and that I can continue school in Marriage, he will be paying. The she agreed and got married. When we staying together with my mother In-law then later on my HB started ambushes of flying [frying chips] he started with K2, 000.00 but he was making a profit of K10, 000.00 after 3-4days per week and he was telling me to keep the money. And later on making more and more profit he started proposing another wife because I was pregnant, and he was saying that “you are now ugly, go back to your mother, I will marry another Wife” I was staying without listening to what he was saying and later on he was not buying soap, salt even Chitenje (cloth), And he bought another wife while I was there then I decided to end marriage and he agreed. As of now the second wife is now pregnant, and my ex-HB has transferred and married another woman in Mangochi. And I have decided to work hard in the field and I have already started making ridges. And I think next year I will go back to school and not getting married.

19th October, 2008

In the morning when I woke-up, I saw some women from Mudzi B and Mudzi A gathering near our house, and I asked them what they were discussing about and they said that they are going to Liwonde for Primary elections of the MP and they were discussing to vote MP Mpaweni because he is the one who is helping people when there is in need of transport (funeral) and he is the one who helped people in Mudzi B when there was a funeral, the none who died in Blantyre.

Later on I saw GVH and her two grand-children clearing in the field near by.

As we were knitting she was saying that I have now finished my house I am now remaining with the roofing. Pamela continued saying that most people have now managed to knit but as of now some are failing to come here because they are busy working in the field while others at MASAF and others at Ganyu (casual labour) . and she also said that as of now I will not marry soon because I want my child to grow up to 6-7 years.

20th October

Early in the morning Innocent came and she told me to go with her to his field to get some firewood because during rainy season it is difficult to dry them. On the way I didn’t saw any one working in the field, and then I asked Innocent Why? And she said that there is a ceremony at Emra remembering that it’s now 40 days since the child died at the field Innocent showed me the other
side that Mr. Chikombo is renting (* part of her field and she said that I charged him K1,500 and the other field k1,800 but she didn’t tell me what she used with the money and she also said that at Liwonde where she went for the elections on 19 October 3 men, 2 children and 4 women injured because the car loaded a lot of people and some of them were just falling down, after collecting the firewood I came back home and I had my breakfast, then I started cleaning the house, plates. After that I went to fetch some water for my garden, I was now happy because, chickens didn’t destroy my crops. Most of the people were busys cooking, fetching some water of the ceremony.

After lunch Livia came as we were knitting, husband of Elube came, and he said that I want to talk to you Livia. Then Livia said that you can talk it hear no problem because Getrude doesn’t hear Yao. Then the Husband of Elube started telling Livia that “My grandson wants a wife so I have decided to tell you so that you can marry him because you don’t have a husband. Then Livia said I need to know (see) him then te man said no problem here is the telephone number for my grandson you can just flash him and discuss where to meet, and after that he will go to meet your parents, because after 3 months he will go to South Africa and he wants to have a wife so that when he coming back you can start living together, Livia laughed and received the phone number. The man left but didn’t ask Livia I was afraid to disturb them. After that Grace joined us but she had a sad face and she was just quite, then I asked her what was the problem? Then she started saying that my husband is not coming back since the day you came for “household interview” and he has also stopped calling me. Then I am thinking that maybe I should just end the marriage because most of the time I used to tell him that (just take me to be staying near you in Mangochi because I am staying alone here as if am not married!” then he just laughed, then I am also thinking that maybe he has another wife because I am working alone in the field., he promised me that he will bring some money for ganyu (casual labour) people but up to now he is not coming. Then Livia answered by saying that (Amuna amasikuano ndi choncho samafuna Banja) (this is how men behave nowadays they don’t want marriage)

Then later on Naima was passing by a certain man, then Grace said that, that one is her first husband but divorced she had the second Husband, then divorced and now she had married the third husband Livia laughed then Grace continued by saying that she is not afraid to be walking around with the husband that divorced, when other men see them, they can go and tell her husband which is not good at all.

After few minutes girls all departed and I went to fetch some water for my garden and for washing my body. Then Pamela came to greet me and she said that “sorry am buys cleaning my new house, I will come tomorrow then I said no problem.

After that Saibi came selling some vegetables and tomatoes, I bought some and she promised that I will be sending a child to give you some vegetables and tomatoes, then I will be coming to collect some money latter on then I said no problem.

Early in the morning Innocent also came telling me to go and cut down a tree in her field for firewood, then I agreed on the way I saw Dorica and her mother working on the field (making ridges) then Innocent left me on the field she said that she is going to help her mother making Zigumu (maize flour cakes) to sell at [large commercial estate] because MASAF people finished working on 19 the October.

When I came back from the firewood I went to fetch some water at the borehole then Hamra told me that at last night the Hyenas came near her house and they caught a goat, but people said that may be some people from this 2 villages (Mudzi A II and Mudzi B) are changing to be Hyenas at night because there is no forest where Hyenas can hide.

After that I started clearing the garden then Livia passed by she said that I will not come to knit because my Ex-Husband will come in the afternoon to see the child.

After lunch I started knitting then Ada joined me, after a few minutes 5-10 min. she departed said that I am going to fetch some water because many people from other Villages are fetching some wand boreholes are not working. after using the same borehole in Mudzi B because other taps and bore holes are not working.

After Ada there was no one else who joined me up to evening at 6:00pm I started watering my garden.

22 October, 2008.

In the morning I went to fetch some water for my garden after that I cleaned the house. Then Livia came she said that sorry I will not join you knitting today because I am going at Balaka to attend tailoring then I said no problem.

After that I had my break fast, after few minutes I started knitting then at 10:20 am I saw two cars at GVH then after 5-10 minutes I saw a certain man coming here (at home) and he introduced himself to me that he is Robert From Ndirande in Blantyre they wanted do a research about AIDS then he asked me if I was ready to answer there questions and I said no problem. Then he also said that this is a secret thing don’t ask any one, their project is called “BRIDGE FOR THE KIT” They asked me about 12 questions a copy of 12 pages some questions I failed to remember but others were like this:

1. Do you have a radio, Phone, and Chairs, Computer?
2. Do you read a newspaper?
3. Do you listen about the youth alert program
4. How many people have got AIDS in this village (People don’t like this question its like gossiping we can not know.)
5. Umamva kapena kuziwa mawu oti nditha [have you heard the word NDITHA] (I CAN MANAGE)?

6. Umagwiritsa ntchito condom. (do you use condoms)

7. Kodi utha kudy a ndi muthu odwala edzi. (can you eat with someone who is affected AIDS)

8. Kodi mudzi muno anhu amodziwa za edzi. (do people in this village know about AIDS)

9. Kodi unamvapo za gulula NAC, PSI, Bridge the Kit. (did you heard about a group called NAC (National Aids Commission, PSI, Bridge for kit) AIDS)

10. Kodi asiing;‘anga angachidze Edzi. (can circumcision prevent from getting AIDS)

11. Kodi Mdulidwe (circumcision) umatetedza Edzi. (can a traditional doctor cure AIDS)

12. Kodi kadzakhala ndi mwana wa mwamuna udzamvinira? [will you circumcise your son].?

13. Kodi atsikana akufalitsa Edzi? (are girls a contributing factor to AIDS)

14. Kodi mtsikana atath kumumuza mtsikana kuti agwiritsa ntchito condom. (can girls advise each other to use condoms)

15. Kodi after 6 months sungatenge Edzi.? (can you get AIDS after 6 months)

16. Kodi Munthu angatenge Edzi chifukwa chogonaan ndi amuna ambiri (can someone get AIDS because of sleeping with a lot of men)

17. Kodi unawelengapo bukhu lolembedwa“Nditha”. (did you read a book titled ‘nditha’ (I can manage)

18. Kodi umafuna udzalekeze kalasi iti? What education level do you want to reach? (What education level do you want to reach?)

19. Kodi utha kusewera ndi munthu odwala edzi. (can you play with someone who has AIDS)

20. Kodi mayi wa mimba (pregnant) atha kuyezetsa magazi? (can a pregnant woman go for blood testing)

21. Kodi utha kumusambitsa (wash body) munthu odwala Edzi? (can you wash a body of someone who has AIDS)

22. Kodi mudzi muno anhu amapanga Bungwe la Edzi? (do you have AIDS project in this village)

23. Kodi anthu akamachez mudzi muno amakamba za Edzi? (do people talk about AIDS when chatting)

24. Odi Mzibambo atha kumuza mkazi wake nkha zo khudza Edzi. (can a husband talk to his wife about AIDS)

25. Kodi pa Tv amaonetsa za Edzi? (does TV show something about AIDS)

26. Kodipaa Wailsi amakamba za edzi. (do radios talk about AIDS)

27. Kodi iiweyo ukafuna kumvetsera warilii umachita ku knzeera. (you listen to the radio, is it planned?)

28. Kodi munthu atha kutenga Edzi ppoonana ndi mwamuna modzi kapena ambiri? (can someone be infected with AIDS after sleeping with one or several men)

29. Kodi pa banja ndi bwino kumakambirana za Edzi? (is it good to talk about AIDS in marriage)

30. Kodi munthu wa edzi tidzi dya naye (ea together). (can we eat together with someone who has AIDS).
31. Kodi ndizoona kuti m’mudzi muno ambiri amadziwa za Edzi. (is it true that in this village a lot of people know about aids)

32. Kodi kugwiritsa ntchitoi CHISHANGO ungapewe Edzi? (can you prevent aids when using a condom)

33. Kodi munthu wa edzi aamoneka bwanji? (how does a person who has aids look like)

34. Kodi Edzi ndi chilango chochokera kwa mulungu (is aids a punishment from God)

35. Kodi utakhala kuti uli ndi edzi ungamuuze mnzako.? (if you can be found with aids can you tell your friends)

36. Kodi kwanu (in you family) amene ali ndi edzi ni anthu angati. (how many in your family are infected with aids)

37. Kodi munthu wa Edzi ayenera kuchita Manyazi? (should a person with aids be shy)

38. Kodi anthu akakwatirana adzigwiritsa ntchito condom? (when people get married should they use condoms)

39. Kodi pa mwezi umagona kangati ndimwamuna? (how many times do you sleep with a man in a month?)

40. Kodi kupatsana moni (shaking hands) ndi munthu wa Edzi atathuka kukupatsira? (If you shake hands with someone who is infected with AIDS can it be transmitted to you)

41. Kodi kudya naye nsima limodzi mutha kutenga edzi? (if you eat with someone who is infected can you get aids?)

42. Kodi edzi imapha? (does aids kill?)

43. Kodi edzi imasowetsa mtendere? (does aids make you not to have peace of mind?)

44. Ulindi mznako amne ali ndi edzi? (do you have a friend who is infected with aids?)

45. Kodi munthu wonenepa (a fat person) atha kukhala ndi Edzi? (can a fat person have aids?)

46. Kodi mwmuna adzikakamiza mkazi wake zagonana? should a man force his wife to have sex?

47. Kodi hule di amen ayenera kugwirisa ntchito kondomu (true that only prostitutes use condoms?)

48. Kodi mzimayi ayenera kumayenda ndi Kondomo Mchikwama? (can a woman travel with a condom in her travelling bag?)

49. Kodi unaonapo chinthu chojambula (poster) mtsikana pali mawu oti (NDITHA)? (have u ever seen a poster with a girl written the word ‘NDITHA’ (I can manage)

50. Anthu ambiri amene ali ndi Edzi ali pantchito zabwino (a lot of people who have aids are those who have a good job)

51. Kodi mabwana ambiri amalemba nchito atsikana akagona nayo? (is it true that a lot of bosses employ girls having sex with them)

52. Question 55: G Answered yes : When she was working at Monsato many girls (packing and stamping seeds etc) slept with Supervisor to keep the job when boss found out supervisor was fired but also all girls (including a friend of G who had told her about this, who had also slept with that Supervisor). At some tobacco companies no women are employed this year because the wives of bosses complained about their Husbands sleeping around during their night shifts)
53. Kodi Pogwiritsa ntcchito condom utha kutenga Edzi? (can you get aids while using condoms?)

54. Kod anthu amadziwa njira zopewera Edzi? Answer true/false. (does people know some of the ways of avoiding aids?).

55. Kodi Hule ndi amene ali ndi edzi? (is it true that a prostitute is the one who has aids)

56. Kodi utakhaal ndi dzi ungachite manyazi? (if you get aids, are you going to be shy?)

57. Kodi M’bale wako atakhaal ndi dzi ungachite manyazi? ? (if one of your relatives has aids can you be shy?)

58. Kodi munthu wodwala edzi ayenera kunmuuza Mnzake? (is it good that if you have aids you should tell your friends?)

59. Kodi mwaan wang’gono atha kutenga Edzi poyamwa Mkaka wa m”mabere? (can a child get aids through breast feeding?)

60. Kodi Mkazi atha kumuuza mwamuna kuti agwiritse ntcchito chisango? (Can a woman tell a man to use a condom?)

After that they told me to answer the same questions by saying true or False.

(Sorry my be I have forgotten some questions because it was difficult to remember everything but most of the questions they were repeating.

After that they told me to ask them if there was a question then I asked them this:

In this Village many people didn’t go very far with Education, they don’t have a radio, no News Papers and when they want to listen to the radio they tune where there is music so what are you going to help them in order to understand?

Then Robert answered that: may be we will discuss at our office but as of no I can not manage to answer.

2. How many people are you going to ask about your questions many have you answer.

Then Robert :we have come 30 people{10 women,10girls,10men}then others are in Ma. Village, J. village Mudzi A, Nd. village but according to here where I am most of the people are just Saying they don’t know more about Edzi and we cannot manage to answer you (while on 5 november Concern Universal Seminar on tree planting and HIV/AIDS showed they know the facts very well.

After that he went where he was coming from the packed their cars at GVH but the car didn’t have any symbol Company then Rosemary came, she was saying that some girls came at home asking me about AIDS, but I told them that I don’t know anything and I was ashamed because they asked me “how many times do you sleep with your Husband”? is that the question to ask me but Janake was not asking this stupid Questions an she gave us some salt an soap while this men and women are just coming empty handed this hunger season she continued saying that they need to ask these questions to those people who live in town. We all laughed and and she went back home saying Gertrude don’t tell me anything about Edzi am Busy at home?

Do you want to know more about AIDS?
After lunch Ada came to knit and she also started complaining the same thing. Ada added by saying that everybody at home was not happy about the questions.

That they were asking and I think this people will not come again this Village, Ada reminded me another question.

64 Kodi munthu amene sanagonepo ndi mwamua amadwaladwala is it true that when you don’t sleep with men you will get ill? (does a person who has never had sex get sick often?)

Then Grace came she was saying that there is a meeting get together at our Church on 23 - 25 October. so i wante to start making mandsi (doughnuts) then I told her everything the she said that thank you very much you have helped me.

And sell them there then I wanted you Getrude to remind me how to make Mandasi (doughnuts) then I told her everything the she said that thank you very much you have helped me.

After that Mrs Musitafa came she said that Getrude I saw same people moving around what were they looking for? Then I told her that they were doing a research about HIV/AIDS then Mrs Musitafa laughed and she said that I think those people ate more nsima where they are coming from! That’s why they decided to come and ask these questions every body laughed then she went back home.

People from town have food, eat well then coming here asking rude questions to people with empty stomach, not even giving anything.

After that I went to fetch some water at the borehole but everybody was saying that these people who came to ask questions about AIDS are mad instead of working in my field do you think I can be busy answering those questions? (all people laughed) I don’t there names may be from other village.

After that I watered my crops at the garden then the heavy wind and some clouds started from 5:30 - 7:10.

That was the end of the day.

23 October, 2008.

In the morning I went to fetch some water at the borehole then I saw Rosemary making ridges at home, then at the borehole I met with Amila and she started started telling me that I went for Ganyu (casual labour) at [nearest primary school] yesterday 22 October, and they gave me K500 (making ridges) and my Husband also went for Ganyu at Nd. village with the money we went to buy Maize at ADMARC and its cheap K52/kg after that I came back home but I found chickens already destroyed crops.

Later on I started cleaning in the house then I found some blood at the door I tried to see if there was some foot steps of something but I didn’t see anything. After that I went back to fetch some water then I heard Fatima talking some people at the borehole we have relatives from S.A and they have sent some money for our family and Chisoni also said that anyone else who have got a husband in S.A in Mudzi B village, we have received money from and clothes. People were just quite to them.

Then later on Livia came she was saying that my Ex-husband came to see the child and he was
saying that I want to help you Livia to cut down a tree for firewood in order to burn some bricks for your house and I will stay here for two weeks. Then Livia continued by saying that I told my ex-husband that I cannot manage to stay with a Man of 2 wives because when buying ndiwo (relish) it means you will be diving into two parts, buying chitenje and divide then I don’t want. Emra was passing by and she told me that I have started selling Zigumu (maize flour cakes) come and buy at home, then I said I will come and see.

After that Livia said that I will ………[can’t read]……………….. then after lunch I went to see Alida she said that she was ill (stomach) after few minutes I went back home then I started knitting then granddaughter to GVH (Sofia) came the one who stays in Balaka then she told me that I am back from Balaka because I want to work on the field here but my husband chased me and married another wife but I am getting worried because I gave birth to children with him. Then I wanted to stay at GVH because she is my Grand mother but she has chased me saying that she cannot manage to feed me and my children but I told her that I am just looking for a shelter I have got my own food but she refused to accept me.

Then went to Explain to Jasmine because she is my mother-in-law I married her son and Jasmine agreed then she gave a house to be staying with my children that’s why I am here.

After that she said that I brought some thread I need a hat for my daughter she has got some wounds (on the head) with the heat of the sun she is just crying. Then I said no problem i will make it for her.

Later on some men were passing by carrying baskets (lichelo) on the Bicycle the granddaughter of GVH told me that they are exchanging baskets with maize (they will be giving people those baskets and people will be giving them Maize). When the men were passing I saw the carrying a 90 Kg (2) of maize.

After that there was a heavy wind and some clouds then I saw Dorica, her Mother, Rosemary, Emra (Grandson of Mudzi B - Kingsley) carrying hoes they were saying that we are going to work on the field again because we are afraid of rainfall we have not yet finished in our fields, after that the wind was still heavy and no one else came.

24 October, 2008

In the morning I went to fetch some water then I met with Saibi then she was telling me that : (have you seen these people at the borehole ?) Instead of going earlier to work on the field then when coming back they can fetch some water. But when the rains starts you will see them very busy doing Ganyu (casual labour) later on they harvest less yield after that I worked on my own garden.

When I went to the borehole for the second time I found some women (three) from other village discussing that : (have you seen our neighbour what she is doing ? she is throwing away some dried cassava (in a pit) instead of giving some people to eat help them (Ganyu in their field) then the other answered that even last year they had more maize but with weevils instead of giving people
After that I was just staying then after lunch Innocent came and she was saying that: in the morning I went sell some Zigumu (maize flour cakes) at [small crossroads market] for my Mother. then I also found Grace selling Mandasi, the at the market Grace explained that: she had found a boy friend in Mzuzu, they met when she went there last year to buy rice for sale and again they met on 19 October 2008 when we went for elections (for MP) then she continued by telling me at the market that :on 27 October i will in Mzuzu to meet with him. He said that he want to give me 10,000 for business. after few minutes Jasmine came and she was saying the same story about Grace but Jasmine added by saying that: she has a husband in Mangochi why can’t she go and stay with Him there ? then Innocent said that maybe that husband have got the wife there (but Pamela said that Grace went to Mzuzu to beg Money from her Uncle).

Then later on Jasmine said that I have now finished making ridges I will be just doing my business while waiting for the rains to come then Dorica came after Innocent and her Mother left. Then Emra then Dorica told me that: they have divorced and the husband went to marry another Wife! But I don’t know the reason and Emra is getting worried because they sold the maize together and for ganyu at [nearest primary school] (Making ridges) with the money the husband used to make a passport ready for South Africa (RSA) and as of now he went to marry another wife which is not good ( Said Dorica) after that Saibi was coming back from the borehole and she was telling her Sister Florence that have stopped working in my field I will continue later because nowadays I am making a lot of profits in my business. then Florence said that my husband is not happy he is saying iam spending more time in the tree project but no benefit instead of taking care of the children (Saibi Laughed).

Later on Lizzie came she said that I just wanted to greet you am going to fetch some waterbut as of now I have already finished making ridges and I have also rented a field I want to grow cotton (Then she left). After knitting I went to fetch some water for my garden.

25 October.

In the morning I went to church on the way I saw Hilda making ridges with Ada her daughter then also met with Emra selling Zigumu (maize flour cakes) at [small crossroads market]. At church I found people already started the service and I joined them but during the announcements ex-husband of Joyce told the congregation that my wife ran away from me but if there is a woman without a Husband she can get me at home [was serious Says G] (people laughed on the way back I met with Saibi selling Zigumu. Then after lunch I started knitting then Ada, Victoria, Innocent, Livia, Daughter of Venesi joined me but after few minutes Pamela came she said that all the women from Mudzi B and Mudzi A must go and collect stones for renewing the slab at the borehole and then we all went there and on the way people were just pointing at Emra saying that the husband ended marriage and married in another village. I also heard Emra telling
Teleza and Julia that “although my husband ran away I am not getting worried because I know how to work on the field”

Then other women were just discussing that: although GVH is not happy because we learning how to knit, lets continue and don’t stop because it will help us. when we will stop that means we are afraid of her.

After few minutes we came back and continued knitting then a certain woman joined us and she said that I want to learn how to make shoes I stay in the house where Rebecca was staying (Its my House) but when I was in the hospital I told Rebecca to stay in my house because my house is her uncle but as of now Rebecca went to her husband not in this Village (and I told her that I will come in the morning for interviews as we did to others).

It was already 5:30 pm and every body departed but no one else went to fetch at the bore hole. they locked it the whole day they said that they will open the other day but all the people were not happy.

At the church the preacher (Joyce’s ex - husband) announced that some people are using the church as a rest house some men and women meet there having sex some one forgot underwear one day we should buy a door.

26th October 2008

In the morning I went for interviews in Mudzi B where Rebecca was staying but I didn’t find any one, then I came back home. After few minutes I went to see Jasmine she said that she was ill (tooth problem) and she was telling me that they are many people at the borehole and most of them didn’t go to work in the field due to lack of water. After that Chief Mudzi A at the home, he was saying that I will start working in the field when I will see some clouds (signs of rainfall) he just greeted me and continued his journey.

After lunch I went to fetch some water at the borehole but there was a lot of people waiting to draw some water, then I just left the bucket and I came back home then I started “kuzira (smearing) at the store room. After that I started knitting then Jane, Victoria joined me and asked again Jane why she was saying that there was a certain boy who wanted to marry her last year but later on the relationship ended and he went to South Africa. (Victoria laughed). Then Victoria answered that why can’t you just continue school next year then Jane said that I will start but my boyfriend is in form 3 may be he will not allow me to continue (we all laughed). Then Jane said that its not good to meet with chibwenzi (boy friend) everyday I get bored, then Victoria said I like to meet with my boyfriend everyday because I miss him(all of them laughed). Jane started telling Victoria that your boyfriend was passing by yesterday and your mother was near by, and I told you that have you seen that nice bicycle! but it was a sign for you to see your boyfriend because “I was afraid of your mother to know him” (Victoria laughed) Jane continued by saying that on Thursday (market day) we should go at [small crossroads market] and friday at [nearest tradingcenter].In order to meet with them (they all agreed)
It was already 5.00pm then I went to fetch some water but there was still more people at the borehore. But they gave me a chance to draw, after that I started watering my crops.

27th October 2008

When I woked up I saw a group of 4 boys clearing the land (ganyu for K500) in GVH’s field. Then I started washing my blanket. After that I went to fetch some firewood, then I Jane making ridges alone in the field, then Dorica her mother and her brother making ridges. Then Innocent was also making ridges alone in the field. Then Mr Ntawanga was passing by where I was fetching firewood then he greeted me and he said that I’m coming from ganyu (casual labour) at my young mother Alma in Mudzi B (making ridges), when coming back I met with Rosemary and Thokozani carrying hoes and they told me that Mavuto! (Problems!) we are coming from ganyu for K1.500 making ridges at K. village.

After that I went for H.H interviews on the way I saw HB of Jasmine making ridges alone. After lunch Fatima came to see me and she started explaining that: There was a certain boy who was lost (disappeared) when he was coming back from school at J. village (form 2) and yesterday I heard that his parents went for almost 8 traditional doctors but failed to find him then later on his parents went to Mocambique to tell another traditional doctor, then when he came back on 26th October now he said that (the boy who disappeared is staying in a certain house) there is a certain old woman who stays in that house and she dug a big hole inside the house and that boy is staying in the big hole but during night hours that old woman sends that boy to work in her field then in the early morning he goes back to that pit. Then Dorica joined us she continued by saying that: the traditional doctor went back to Mocambique to get strong medicine in order for that boy to get out of that house and people will gather today to on 27th October and I will go to see but when coming back I will tell you everything! It is very far don’t follow me but I will take a bicycle.

After few minutes the grandson of GVH shouted by telling people in the villages that: I’m going lock the borehore at 5:00pm for two days we want to make a slab then I don’t want to see anyone fetching water tomorrow.

Then everybody in villages were busy drawing water, I didn’t go because I had enough water. Then no-one else joined me knitting.

28th October 2008

In the morning I was just staying because the borehore was locked on 27 October and no-one else fetched some water. Then later on I wanted to help Livia working on the field but she told me that I went there already. After that I came back home then Fatima came to greet me and she was saying that Grace has gone to Mzuzu and she has left ganyu (casual labour) people on the field. She said that she will pay those people with the money that someone else in Mzuzu will give her. After that I saw GVH telling Kondwani to start making ridges (ganyu) on her field near by. Then Fatima was saying that: the GVH received some money from her son in south Africa.

After lunch I started knitting when at 4:00pm Pamela, Innocent, Victoria, Livia, Jane, Fatima, Ada joined me (they were late because they went to Adult school). Then Pamela said that I
should make a hat for her son and Thokozani also came and she said that I should make some shoes and a hat for her daughter. I made those things the same day I charged K50 every body(I used my thread) and they were all happy because at Balaka they charged them K150.00 each.

0306 29 Oct 2008

0307 In the morning I started cleaning the house, plates after that I saw many women from Mudzi B & Mudzi A carrying their children on the their back then Pamela passed by & she told me that we are going at [nearest primary school] to receive some medicine (Vitamins and Vaccination )for children about 6 months old-5 years

0308 After that I was just staying because the borehole was still locked but after lunch they opened it and I went to fetch some water but most of the people were at [nearest primary school].

0309 After lunch I started knitting then Fatima joined me. she said that my HB told me to learn knitting not just staying. Then I said that no problem I will teach you, Then Livia & Chisoni joined us & they were happy saying that (during the rain season we will buy thread and we will be making zipewa ,shoes for sale)(we all laughed) then Chisoni said that the HB of GVH is still sick but instead of going to the hospital for a Sing’anga searching for traditional medicine. Then Fatima answered by saying that the problem is that he has 4 wives and as of now he is spending 1 week to the first wife, up to finish moving around to every wife (we all laughed )

0310 Later on Livia said that Lizzie received thirteen thousand kwacha from her HB in South Africa.

0311 Then all the women said that we are going to attend adult school we will come tomorrow. Then Jane joined me as we were knitting she started saying that my grandmother (GVH) is forcing me to have another HB and get married & I told her that I want to go back to school, Jane continued by saying that ndinali ndi chibwenzi koma makolo ake a mwamuna samandifuna akuti ineyo ayi! Koma panopa anapatku S.A ndiye ndikumudikira kuti abwele Kaye. Koma makolo ake amupezelka mkazi wina woti adzakwatinane naye. (I had a boyfriend but his parents didn’t like me as of now he is in SouthAfrica am waiting for him to come back but his parents has found a wife for him to marry) But I don’t know what to.

0312 After that Rosemary came & she was saying (my HB is not sleeping at home he has also gone to another wife I married him to be helping one another but am just doing ganyu (casual labour)alone )It was already 5:45 pm & everybody departed.

0313 30th Oct 2008

0314 In the morning I went to fetch some firewood & on the way I saw Dorica & her mother making ridges on their field and HB of Fatima making ridges(ganyu ) (casual labour)on the field of Malita and Jane making ridges alone in the their field. When I came back I started watering my garden

0315 Later on I went to fetch some water then at the borehole I found Tumanene telling some people that my HB sent a cell phone for me (if you want have a cell phone and money you need to marry a man who wants to go to South Africa )so that you can have your. (no -one answered)when I reached home I met with Jasmine & she started telling me that I have sold my goat at MK4500 and am now going to buy maize at Admarc for food & seed to plant because the rainfall is about come
After lunch Fatima joined me & she was saying that my HB was happy yesterday because I have started learning how to knit and she also said that we are now eating Nandolo (pigeon peas) + cassava for lunch and nsima for dinner. Then chief Mudzi B came she also said that I went for ganyu (casual labour) at N. village making ridges MK1000. Am keeping that money in order to buy fertilizer but I want to learn knitting is it possible? Then I said no problem. Hilda was passing by then she greeted me & said that am tired am coming back from ganyu at K. village village making ridges.

After few minutes Innocent joined me and she said that: Am late today because I had a visitor he said that he is looking to rent & I charged him MK1000 and he said that he will come later.

After that everybody was quite busy knitting. Then at 5:00 pm everybody departed then I started watering my garden.

31 Oct 2008

In the morning Livia came to greet me and she said that last night we passed by your bouse going to Emra, Her ex-HB came at night and he found her with HB of Ainessi at the bedroom then the ex-HB was angry and he took a sharp knife and cut a part of the forehead of Emra & she cried loudly saying that I will not stop having sex with this man because you left. Then Ainessi was just crying saying that my HB at night cheated me that he was going to buy ndiwo (relish) at Mudzi B, not knowing that he was going to the house of Emra. And even Emra, she is my real friend, I help her making zigumu (maize flour cakes)

Then Jane came she was also telling me the same story of the last night but she added by Teleza was doing that habit at school she was sleeping with male teachers so that when she is late at school she should not be punished (Jane laughed).

Then Chief Mudzi B came she was saying that I have received my salary at MASAF then I want some shoes and a hat for my daughter then I said no problem I will make for her.

After lunch Grandson of Mudzi B came and he was saying that people will receive coupons on Sunday 2nd Nov & group villages will receive a cell phone and a radio.

After lunch I started knitting but there was heavy wind & clouds then no-one else joined me.

1st Nov 2008

In the morning I went to fetch some water then on the way I saw Emra & HB of Ainessi including Ainessi I didn’t heard what they were discussing about but at the borehole people said that HB of Ainessi wants to marry Emra to be 2 wives (people laughed) & others said that the relationship of Emra & HB of Ainessi started before the child of Emra died. Some people at the borehole were also saying that Jonassi brother of Katiya (who was on the picture) gave pregnant to certain young girl & they have now started staying together but the parents of both sides are not happy because they are still young (other people laughed) after that I started watering my garden then Jane came & she was saying that the owner of this house is pregnant from another HB and her grandmother told her to go and take a sewing machine and a bicycle that her son who is in S.A left.
Then after lunch I started knitting & Phingi came she was saying that sorry Livia will not come today to knit because she has gone to Balaka for tailoring. After few minutes Emra was passing by then Phingi said that the HB of Ainessi escorted Sakina to the Hospital & she (Emra) telling people that I am not ashamed because anybody knows the meaning of sex and I will not stop sleeping with him. Then Phingi continued by saying that :even Mphatso (young sister to Ainessi) is in relationship with HB of Ainessi and HB of Emra (Jasmine continued :I don’t like girls of nowadays they just have sex with different men but without )we all laughed and Phingi continued her journey to the borehole.

After that I was knitting alone then at 5:00 pm Livia was coming back from tailoring then she greeted me and said that she met with her ex-HB on the way! Then she gave her MK300 for soap, but she didn’t beg, after Livia no-one else came.

2nd Nov 2008

In the morning I was going to fetch some water then on the way Jane called me, and she was saying that HB of Ainessi wanted to beat me, because there was a certain day that I was washing my body & he came while I was naked at the bathroom in order to sleep with me then I refused. later on I explained to my grandmother but she said that “just forgive him, I was angry (said Jane) because my grandmother didn’t help me. Jane continued by saying that HB of Ainessi was also in relationship with Doris and on 1st Nov because of the story of Emra he runned away and climbed in a mango tree because many people were laughing at him. But mother of Ainessi (Rosemary) told the people that don’t laugh at him because he has got power to choose a wife of his heart. Jane continued :this story (the same ) happened to Pamela she was staying in Zomba with her HB but she was also having sex with her in-law of the same house(Young brother to her HB) later on she was chased from Zomba to Mudzi B as a punishment. And here in Mudzi B Pamela started chibwenzi with a doctor from [nearest tradingcenter] hospital. And one day the doctor slept at Pamela's house. Then at the midnight the HB from Zomba came to pick her but he found her with another HB at the bedroom. Then the HB from Zomba Decided to Divorce & he took all the 2 children.

After few months Pamela had another chibwenzi (boyfriend) from M. village and 1 night again a man from M. village slept in the house of Pamela without knowing that the doctor will come the same night, then when the doctor came he also found Anne with a man from M. village & the relationship ended & also a man from M. village ended the relationship the same night, after few days Pamela found herself that she was pregnant Jane was laughing & she was comparing with the story of Emra

After that I continued my journey to fetch to fetch some water. And at the borehole people were discussing that the chief has gone (g, Mudzi B) to take some coupons at [small crossroads market] for the whole village. After that I went to fetch firewood and on the way I saw Dorica, her mother & her brother making ridges on the field & when I was coming back I met with GVH & she told me that I am going to receive my coupon: this year the government has changed the decision they said that everybody who registered must go and receive alone. not a chief or a GVH receiving for their village no, because
most of them were cheating and stealing said GVH.

After that I started washing my cloths then Innocent came she told me that last night a hyena came at the house of (mother to Chief Mudzi B & caught a big goat & killed it

At 11:00 0 clock people were coming back from [small crossroads market] & I asked 1 woman & she said that the coupons are not ready they will tell us when they are ready.

After lunch I started knitting but no-one else joined me, And Livia came saying that sorry am busy my ex-HB has come he wants to help me collecting firewood for burning my bricks before the rains starts.

I was knitting alone, then at 5:00 pm I heard a sound of a car and a loudly voice announcing that tomorrow on 3rd Nov those who registered must go at [small crossroads market] to receive a coupon, those who will be selling coupons will be punished (life in prison)

3rd Nov 2008

In the morning I started sweeping then I saw Kondwani & her 3 children making ridges (ganyu) (casual labour) at GVH's field, after that I went to fetch some water & a lot of people were busy passing by going at [small crossroads market] to receive coupons and on the way back I saw Emra charting with HB of Ainessi

At 10:00 am Fatima came to knit she said the hyena is still moving around at night even at [nearest primary school] village, After few minutes she went back after that I started watering my garden

After lunch I started knitting then Pamela joined me she said that she didn’t go to receive a coupon because she is attending a seminar at [nearest primary school] (for tree project) after that at 3:30 pm people were now coming back from coupons then Victoria joined knitting & Ada. Then Fatima and Victoria explained that GVH registered other daughters (her daughters) who are in Lilongwe then she told Jane to be on behalf of the those people (took their names) Pamela answered that :this year some policemen are there watching and everybody is receiving her on & signing using a stamp those who do not know how to write, (fingerprints) Adas said that the GVH was just quite. but other villages everybody received 2 coupons for different variety of fertilizer, but in Mudzi B only 1 coupon each, Ada continued by saying that (this year most of the people kept some money to buy fertilizer, others sold goats, chickens, MASAF, others received money from (HB in S.A) others ganyu (casual labour) this time most of the people have got maize till Dec but the problem is ndiwo (relish) (said Pamela) at 5:45 people departed

4th Nov 2008

In the morning I saw Kondwani making ridges (ganyu) (casual labour) in the field of GVH and later on I went to fetch some water then on the way I saw mother of chief Mudzi B making ridges on her field. Then at the borehole I heard Hamra telling her friend that although I didn’t receive a coupon I will not stop working on my field I will apply manure and God will help me
In the morning when I waked up I saw Kondwani continuing ganyu (casual labour) but with two children in the field in the field of GVH and when I was going to the borehole I saw mother of chief Mudzi B making ridges on her field and people at the borehole were just saying that: (the rain will start soon because of the lightening of the last night). Livia:

*use traditional medicines (a string it works for rope around the waist

*hospital injections

*Other men instead of releasing the sperm inside the Vagina they release outside

Then Livia went to the hospital to take an injection (3 months ) couldn’t explain why she did it Ex-HB recently wanted to sleep with her on her field when they went there to cut firewood, but she refused, he asked her if she want to be with him (since she went for an injection today) but she denies

Jane doing ganyu (casual labour) at grandmother field (GVM) to find money to buy thread to have (knit something for a relative) (had seen them both on GVMs field but thought Jane was just helping, but Jane says: grandmother received money But I cannot beg only in return for ganyu, wants to buy shoes and saw a skirt in Balaka at MK250 wants to wear expensive clothes in this village

8th Nov 2008

Kondwani again doing ganyu (casual labour) on GVM field behind our house in the early morning a Grandmother of GVM working on the field

Nov 9

Kondwani again on GVM field behind our house, with children in the morning hours, also Jane mother of chief Mudzi B making ridges and Amila making ridges alone

10th Nov 2008

Kondwani was still doing ganyu (casual labour) in the field of Mudzi B, when I was going to the borehole I met with mother of chief Mudzi B making ridges on her field. Then on the way back I met with Mr. Ntawanga going for ganyu and when we were working on the field Jasmine was going to work on the field at mosque when I went to fetch some water again I saw Tinenenji selling some g/nuts. Amila went to borrow a scissors then she was told that I cannot borrow you because there is HIV

Nov 18

GVH working on the field between ours and Rosemarys house clearing Dorica is doing ganyu on the same field, GVHs grandson has also been coming each afternoon to do the ganyu on that field, most morning Kondwani also. HB of GVH sitting at the veranda of little house next to ours.


29th Nov 2008

When I came back from Balaka for shopping’s I went to give Livia her Nandolo seeds (pigeon peas) then I found Jasmine making zigumu (maize flour cakes) for sale.

Then after few minutes daughter of Venesi was passing by, then I asked Jasmine where that girl found her baby, Then Jasmine said that ask Innocent she will explain to you. Then Innocent said that the girl is 14 -15 years and she was impregnated by the HB of Nola (the old Man) when she was at school he was giving her money to buy soap & they were having sex at Banana trees in the field of people, Then Innocent continued by saying that the old man refused the pregnancy he said that I am weak and my sperms are very weak and I cannot sleep with this young girl, Then daughter of Venesi stopped school.

After that Innocent said I would like to meet with young brother of Mr. Chikombo (H, master of nearest primary school) he is looking some people to work in his field (ganyu/kupalira) (casual labour/weeding) after few minutes the H.master passed by then Innocent told him that I want ganyu for MK500 kupalira then the H, master said no problem you will start on 5th Dec. At the same time the H.master told his fried that this is your in-law (pointing at Innocent) & Innocent just smiled then they continued their journey.

After that Jasmine told Innocent to go to the pig kraal and I followed her when reached there I found Suset selling Kachasu (traditionally distilled beer) & there was 5 men customers and one of the customers told Suset Akazi anga ndikufuna mowa ngati simundipatsa ndigona konkuno (my wife, I want some beer if you don’t give me I will spent a night here) other men were just laughing but her HB was there he was also drinking beer from there it was already 5:30 pm and I went back home & I started cooking. But Suset sold for MK1000 that day (said Innocent).

30th Nov 2008

In the morning I went to fetch some firewood, water then I saw Emra making ridges in her field. then around 10:00 I started knitting & Livia joined me as we were knitting she started saying that “I was pregnant to this second child ndili chibwenzi (when we were in relationship) asanandikwaiire (before we got married). Then after 4 months he married me & before I gave birth to this child we divorced and we met at the hospital when he heard that I have got a baby then he brought soap, lotion & cloths for a child “after few minutes he went back home (it was lunch)Then around 1 o clock a council of [clinic] village came and he was saying that he wanted to greet us and ask why people in the village are not going for blood testing and I just told him that I don’t know. And he continued by saying that I would like to tell some people to help me to find out why most of the people are not going there. After few minute he bought Chipewa (hat) and continued his journey.

After lunch I saw some people gathering at the mosque to attend a certain Meeting for Muslims but the one who told people to gather there, didn’t but most of the people were not happy.
At 3:30 I went to finish some missing question to Mudzi A but first of all I talked to Jasmine! Jasmine said that most of people they don’t know that they can drink milk from goats but cows only. Even herself (Jasmine) she just tried only once because he was ill (stomach).

Jasmine: About her marriage she explained that with my HB we are relatives because my mother is the cousin of my HB. Then his parents came to talk with my parents & my parents agreed but we stayed 3 years before getting married because I was still at school. Then I agreed because my real mother was staying in Zimbabwe & there was no-one else to continue paying school fees for me.

About loan she explained that at the beginning people from CUMO came and talked to the chief (group) that they wanted to have a meeting to those people who can be interested to be taking loans. Then all the people (7 villages of GVH) gathered and the CUMO explained how to start taking loans, how to pay back, and their rules, how they will treat those people who fail to pay back and after their explanation, they told them to register if they want.

Others are refusing because they say that they cannot manage to pay back after 2 weeks but if it was once a month they could have joined (said Jasmine).

From there I continued my journey to Teleza.

She said that she planted maize, nandolo (pigeon peas), mtedza (ground nuts), maungu (pumpkins), mseula and she will plant cotton if the rain continues.

-all the crops bought to Magda but for maize seeds she will go for ganyu (casual labour) to her field.

-Fertilizer bought 1 bag but she received the whole coupon no-one to share with (I don’t know the reason said Teleza) but I failed to buy 2 bags because my uncle said that he didn’t receive a coupon & I gave him to buy.

The money that I used to buy I borrowed from Magda.

-Mammawa-mango (morning mangoes for break fast)

Masana-nsima +matemba (lunch nsima and dry fish), Matemba (dry fish) bought from someone else who was passing by, someone else borrowed my money and she gave me back, then I used to buy ndiwo (relish)

-Maize for nsima I bought from a certain pastor MK52 per kg & I bought 12 kgs but I have forgotten where I found the money.

3 Suset: She planted maize-cotton -Soya -mtdenza (ground nuts) -nandolo (pigeon peas) -nkobwe (cow peas) -maunngu (pumpkins)
All seeds bought from Magda though the business of beer

-1 bag coupon shared with Kima - money used after renting her field to someone

-Mammawa-mango (break fast mangoes)

Masana - nsima + nandolo (lunch nsima and pigeon peas)

Madzulo - nsima + nandolo (dinner nsima and pigeon peas)

Maize for nsima bought 5 kgs at MK70 per kg through business of beer selling and nandolo bought by money through ganyu (casual labour)

Loan = she wants to start a business of buying and selling fish, including kachasu I decided my self to take loan chifukwa ndili ndi mpamba wochepa ndiye ndikufumma ndiwonjezere because I don’t have enough capital for business and I want to add

-Anthu ena amanena kuti sangakwanitse kubweza ngongole ndi chifukwa chake samatenga (other people says that they cannot manage to pay back loan that’s why they don’t take)

Anapangitsa mnsokhano anayitanitsa anthu ammidzi ya (we had a meeting for all those people who stays in the village of ) GVH & they explained how to start taking loans, how to pay back. Komanso ananena kuti wofuna atha kulembetsa ndikuyamba kutenga ngongole ndiye ndikatenga (and they also said that for those who want to take loan can register and start getting the loan and I will take mine on) Tuesday

2 Dec 2008

(But at my return to Mudzi B still no loans were given (Feb. 8 200g) each meeting, participants are told by CUMO extension workers staying at [small crossroads market] that they cannot give money yet but next week. Because people had not been paying back their loans, Jasmine today suggested that the man may have used the money for himself, and that they should may be stop going if it just continues like this

After that I went to talk to Kima, then I saw Livia feeding the pigs

4 Kima

Ndadzala chimanga (I have planted)—Soya - mtedza (groundnuts) - maungu (pumpkins) - mseula - will plant khobwe (cow peas), but the seeds bought from Magda

-Fertilizer bought 2 bags and received a whole coupon the money that she used was the one her daughter sent

-Mammawa-sindinadye ndinapita ku Maliro (in the morning I didn’t eat because I went to attend the funeral)

_Masana - Ndinadya ku maliro, nsima nyemba + nsomba (I ate lunch at the funeral ,, nsima beans and fish)

-Madzulo-nsima + matemba (for dinner I ate nsima and dry fish) maize started buying at [nearest tradingcenter] MK70 per kg (vendors) through the business of selling beer.

When I was talking to Kima, Livia was chatting with Suset and I was just listening what they were discussing and I heard Suset telling Livia that I heard you that certain man wants chibwenzi (relationship) with you but you are not answering properly then he told me that if u don’t want, that means he
will propose another wife because it seems like you don’t want, Then Livia told Suset that I will just write a letter and you will give him (ndavomera) (I have accepted) but don’t tell my mother, then on Tuesday I will tell my mother not to come and feed the pigs, I will come so that I can give the letter to give him or else, I will meet with him here (Suset & Livia) smiled and shook hands

When I was passing by they stopped talking and I continued my journey back home

Than Magda gave me some g/nuts and a decoration for me to see what she was knitting when she was a young girl. From there I went to see Chenawe (old woman) and her HB said that he wanted chipewa (hut) & he said that I will give you money later on. Then Chenawe started saying that this year most of the people will not have food to eat in end December because no Mangoes and dzuwa lambiri (very hot) (this shows that Chaka cha mawa kuli njala (next year there will be hunger) ) from there I went back home & at 4:40 Jane came to greet me

I started knitting then friend of Jane joined me (the one who was helping Jane on the field) as we were chatting friend of Jane started saying that the owner of this house wanted to rape me then I shouted but some one heard my voice (at dambo (garden) I went to plant vegetables and he was passing by) she continued by saying that he used to propose a woman by forcing her to accept with angry face and aloud voice most of the women used to agree, because of being afraid according to the way he looks (appearance)

Then Jane continued by saying that someone proposed me and he started touching my breasts although I didn’t agree, but I will see later on may be I will accept chibwenzi because he already touched my breasts (all laughed) then friend of Jane continued by saying that Kondwani (daughter of Rosemary) has married but people in Mudzi B are saying that in the afternoon she used to be afraid to enter in her house because the HB is just telling her to have sex anytime (all laughed) after 5:30 they all departed

1 Dec 2008

In the morning at 8:30 am I was having my breakfast then Rosemary passed by with the HB coming back from the field (all carried hoes) the HB went straight to the house of Rosemary

After that I went to fetch some water then HB of GVH was still making ridges alone in the field (9:20) after that I started reading what I have been writing, after lunch I went to talk with Rosemary and I found her eating nsima + matemba with the HB while her children were just drinking thobwa (gruel)

1 Rosemary

Nndazala nandolo (I have planted pigeon peas)-maize-mseula-tomato-maungu (pumpkin)-I will go for ganyu (casual labour) to her field (kupalira“mnola) (weeding)
She will now replant because not all seeds germinated

Bought 1 bag coupon shared with her daughter Sakina) fertilizer bought through ganyu (casual labour)

Ndizasakaniza pothira kuti munda wonse ukwanire (I will mix the fertilizer when applying so that it will be enough for the whole field)
Mammawa -mango (breakfast mango)

Masana -palibe -no Ufa (lunch nothing no maize flour)

Madzulo-nsima+nsomba HB bought (dinner some nsima and fish)

From there Ada came she told me to go with her at [clinic] village where a traditional doctor came to take out the boy who was still staying in the house of old woman (the boy who got lost when he was coming back from school) then on the way I found chief Mudzi B explaining to Esnart Lajab that she went at [nearest trading center] to buy maize for food MK52 per kg money found through ganyu. Still on the way Thokozani started explaining that this year kupalira ganyu (weeding, casual labour) will be 50 Tambala per phando (planting station) while last year it was 20-25 tambala and cotton will be 120-125MK per kg while last year it was MK75 per kg

That’s why other people are working hard in cotton field not maize

When we reached there (after [clinic] village hospital 70 minutes distance) we found a lot of people gathered from different villages & the singanga (traditional doctor) was also there from Mozambique and 6 police men

Most of the people were just discussing about the old woman who bewitched the son, they were saying that her son is staying in S.A and he wants to come back but he bought some materials in order to open a maizemill here in Malawi at [clinic] village

Then for a business to work properly he went to a certain tree doctor to get some medicine & he was told that you need to kill someone from his village then you will become rich and she explained this to her mother & she replied no problem I will find a certain strong boy from our village. As for now her mother called him (by telephone) what is happening here & he answered that (chonde amayi musaulure mankhwalawo pamene ali (don’t reveal) chifukwa ineyo nditha kufa mukawulura (please my mother don’t reveal where I kept the medicine because I will die as soon as u reveal to them)

After few minutes a sing’anga started pointing to young boys and girls who are witches in that village but they learned from that old woman. After that he explained to the whole group of people that I have failed to take out that boy but may be tomorrow because old woman is just taking out weak medicine not strong ones she is hiding (people shouted and departed (she used strong medicine to hide the boy)

On the way back I was with Thokozani & she started explaining that every night she is just dreaming about GVH forcing her to eat meat & one day she also dreamed about the same woman changing from a woman to a man and having sex with her in dreams. then later in the morning she passed by GVH but she didn’t greet her and she continued by saying that am afraid that one day she will kill my children

We were just running when we were coming back home because there was heavy wind (sign of rainfall, but it did not) At home Innocent came she said that tomorrow 2 December will go to receive (loan) then heard her that I will go with you. then Innocent said that no problem I will for wait you.

2nd December 2008
In the morning after breakfast I went at [nearest primary school] to attend CUMO meeting. I went there with Innocent, Suset and Jasmine. At [nearest primary school] there was almost 3 groups (10 per group) but for Jasmine it was only for 7 people), but the other group received 64 thousand & Melina was included. The group of Jasmine didn’t receive anything because of other balances (they didn’t pay back the whole amount [J: in Feb CUMO found that this had been a mistake in their computer. The outstanding balance of app. 3000 MK belonged to another group]) only Suset, Innocent & Jasmine are participating in Mudzi B & Mudzi A. At the meeting people were saying that even in their villages some of them are not participant "akuti amachita mantha sangakwanitse kubweza ngongole" (they say that they are afraid they can’t take loan). I asked the one who was giving loans to people if they choose people to participate but he said that anyone else who wants to join can register.

Every meeting; members need to pay k50 they keep at treasure book. Other members were not happy with this contributions. this money they keep for 4 months & share instead of this money at the bank (said alangizi) (extension worker). They also contributed some money ndalama iliyonse yomwe munthu wayipeza kupeleka kwa Alangizi kuti adziwasungila kwa 4 months kenako kugawana (said alangizi) (any amount of money that a person have they contribute and give it to the extension worker to keep it for them then after 4 months they share, said the extension worker). e.g. Jasmine contributed MK100, Innocent MK50, Suset MK50. [G: I guess that Alangizi is the one who use this money]

When paying back loan 2-3 women should be sent to the bank as witnesses. Not giving alangizi. I remember gave an example that some one else at [nearest trading center] cheated his friends that thieves stole some money when he was going to pay back loan MK32000. He was alone and it was difficult to believe him (either thieves or he used the money himself). Venesi will not continue taking loan because this hunger season people can not buy anything & it aid will be difficult to pay back (but as of now she have got a balance k500 and she need to pay back said Jasmine. All members signed to agree that the loan should be given to them. But they will receive in 4 December said Alangizi. (the extension worker)

On the way back home Jasmine was saying that; when I will receive this loan I will give k500 to ganyu people (kupalira) (casual labour for weeding) and Innocent said the same words. Jasmine continued by saying that I will use the other money to buy maize because I don’t have anything to eat & I will start business later on. From their I went to talk to Sweetness.

1. Sweetness

The floods happens every year. [oyambayika moyithi mmatumba panopa matumba tilibe; koma alangizi (Ntawanga) atiuzu kuti atipatsa udu kuti tidzole ndiye tidzala panopa. (at first we were putting sand in a sack bag but as of now we dont have those sack bags but the extension worker (Ntawanga) said that he will give us some grasses so that we should plant and we will plant now)]

From their I went to Lizzie then I found them making ufa woyera. On the way back home I met with Livia was going to the maize mill. Then Livia said that I will eat phala (porridge) this lunch because we don’t have enough Ufa (maize flour).

Suset said that (telling Livia) you should come tomorrow with that letter because that man will be at home drinking beer. (I didn’t ask anything) but after few minutes Livia came home to borrow a pen then I asked her what she answered that (ndikufuna ndilembe kalata kwa asisi ku Mangochi (I want to write a letter to my sister at Mangochi) I I didn’t continue asking her.
In morning I started cleaning the house then after that I went to fetch some water & I saw group Mudzi B her he & grand children (2) clearing the field & making ridges. On the way back I saw Rosemary coming back from the field alone.

After break fast I saw Innocent & Sofia going at [nearest trading center] Admarc to buy maize for nsima (Sofia’s HB sent money) (Innocent’s her mother kept from business) but they back without maize because at Admarc there was no maize (already finished on 2 December ).At 10;30 Kondwani came to knit & she was saying that she went for ganyu (casual labour) (kupalira (weeding) at K. village with 4 young boys from Mudzi B but 40t per phando) and Dorica said that she want to buy some note books & soap, lotion with that money preparing for school.

At 01;30 I went to Innocent’s house to take my knitting needles then on the way I saw Fatima & her Daughter eating nsima, Elube &her Daughter were also eating nsima. then I found Sofia & her children eating nsima, Jasmine grand daughter & Innocent were also eating nsima with matemba ( dry fish).

At 4:00 Thokozani came she said that she wanted to learn how to knit. As we were knitting we saw 4 women passing by then Thokozani said that Mr. Ntawanga s father ali pa chibwezi ndi mzimayi wa kwa J. village (is in relationship with a woman from J. village) ndiye akazi awo a Mr. Ntawanga (elder) amadandaula kuti amuna awo sakugona mnnyumba komanso saguila chakudya ndiye awathandize kuti mkaziyo athetse chibwezi ndi abambowo (then the wife of mr Ntawanga (elder) was complaining that her HB is not spending a night at her house and he is also not buying food, now he should help her so that the other wife must end the relationship with that man) (they went to explain to GVH )conclusion not known.

At 4:00 I went to Amila ndi for missing questions but she was not there she went to see some friends at K. village & I just heard some people saying that Grace is back from Mzuzu, then I went back home.

At 07;00 pm Pamela came to greet me then I asked her where she was coming from, then she answered by saying that ndimaperekeza amuna anga ( I was escorting my HB). Pali a bambo ena ake anandifunsira banja ndiye ndinavomera koma ndinawauza kuti asanandikwature ndiwone kaye khalidwe lawo (there is a certain man who is proposing for marriage and I have accepted but i told him not to marry me till I know his behavior)

Then Pamela continued by saying that I will tell you if will get married to this man (But he is ready to marry me)

Then after 15 minutes she left

In the morning I went to fetch some water and I saw Livia making ridges, near the borehole I saw Lovely replanting (maize) after breakfast I started knitting then Thokozani joined me. Then she started explaining that my HB, HB of Fatima (the one who was doing ganyu (casual labour) in the field of GVH) went to drink beer at J village they went there to celebrate that his wife has got a baby girl & he bought beer for himself + 2 friends

She also explained that Rosemary rented a field from GVH at MK1000 her elder brother
sent some money (the one who is staying at Ch. village she also continued by saying GVH gave 
Mphatso (daughter of Rosemary) 1/4 acre only because she is now married. And Mphatso was complaining 
that her HB bought fertilizer 1 bag but the field is very small while GVH has got a lot of land but 
she wants some people to be renting not giving them free of charge, Thokozani continued by saying last 
harvest most of the people refused to do ganyu in her field because she used to pay them a little 
money but big field (ridges, kupalira (weeding) then she just hired young boys

0458 Thokozani said that I went to [nearest tradingcenter] to buy mseula (MK50 through ganyu then Chenawe was 
passing by & Thokozani started saying that the HB of Chenawe used to drink a lot of beer & at night he also 
chase his wife not to sleep in- the house, sometimes staying naked (after drinking a lot of beer ) but 
always hide the behavior of her HB at 10:30 I saw Rosemary & HB + son coming back from the Chenawe 
field & Thokozani said that (they went together for ganyu (casual labour) but 30t Phando (per planting 
station)

At 11:30 Thokozani left

At 2:30 I went for the missing questions in Mudzi B then I started talking to Kondwani

1. Kondwani

0462 Ndazala chimanga (I have planted maize) (her mother gave her) thonje (cotton) (borrowed)
nandolo (pigeon peas) bought at mk60 khoabwe (cow peas) (kept) mtedza bought at MK150 -
Maungu (pumpkins) (begged from friends) the seeds bought at the grocery (Nduwa village)

0463 Fertilizer bought 2 bags (coupon shared with her mother (old woman) but she refused to buy ) and 
she told her daughter that she don’t like applying fertilizer all the years but she used to harvest a lot 
, she don’t even apply manure she says that fertilizer destroys fertility in the soil not adding fertility

0464 Money found to buy fertilizer through ganyu (casual labour) (making ridges)

0465 She will just mix when applying kuti adzakwanire minda yonse (so that it should be enough for the whole field)

0466 Mammawa- mango (break fast mangoes)

0467 Masana -nsima +masamba (a mtchire) (lunch nsima and vegetables collected from the bush)

0468 Madzulo -phala no ndiwo (dinner porridge no relish)

0469 Maize for nsima bought at [nearest tradingcenter] Admarc MK52 per kg she bought 15kgs for MK780-

0470 About business she explained that ndasiya chifukwa ndi kulima komanso chinangwa kulibe komanso 
koma january akayamba kugulitsa ku D. village (I have stopped because iam working on the field and 
apart from that there is no cassava then I will start in January because that’s when people from D. 
village start selling) from there I saw some 3 men putting a new 
roof iron sheet of the house of Ayama. then Amila said that her son from 
S.A is the one who bought the iron sheets [People say that she is among those who kept the rain 
from falling, bcoz the rains only came back after her iron sheets were put in place...]

0471 2. Blessings

0472 Ndazala chimanga -nandolo -nkhwani -mtedza - (I have planted maize, pigeon peas, pumpkin leaves and ground nuts) 
(not finished -now replanting)

0473 All seeds kept - fertilizer bought 1 bag (shared with Lovely) money kept when the HB sent -
Fertilizer ndidzasakaniza pothira chifukwa munda ndi waukulu (I will just mix the fertilizer when applying because I have abig field)(that means it will not be enough)

She also continued by complaining that HB used to cheat her that I am going to work in the field & you should not go today just stay here & take care of the children when I followed him to the field I didn’t find him there he went to drink beer from 6 am - 6 pm

As of now I used to go in the morning to my field then late afternoon for ganyu, am working both sides apart from that I told my HB that we need to be helping one another when buying maize for nsima e.g. contributing MK400-MK400 not only drinking, then he accepted as we were knitting

Thokozani also continued by saying that Mphatso (her young sister) has married a man from [clinic] village as of now he bought fertilizer he left school in form 3 and he is working at Balaka but at a certain mosque sometimes he used to sleep there at Balaka

She also continued that Chisoni aborted when she was at school then as of now she is telling some people that someone else has bewitched me in order for me to any child ndiye ndipita kwa asinganga kuti munthuyo ndimudziwe (then I will go to the traditional doctor so that I should know the person who bewitched me) (Thokozani said that akuyiwala/kuti...
amangochotsa mimba) (she has forgotten that she always abort)

After few minutes a certain boy passed by then Thokozani said that the boy went to buy a goat from Emra for MK5000 & she continued by complaining that my young sister Ainessi is pregnant & only few days to deliver but the HB used to sleep at Emra’s house leaving her alone. Then Ainessi is getting worried because she will not manage to go alone to the hospital at [nearest trading center] by foot.

She [Thokozani] also continued by saying that the owner of this house was just proposing anyone else and he slept with most of the people in this village except 40-60 (old women) & he was also telling some of his friends that ndimafunanso nditagona ndi amayi [my mother] koma ndimalephera (chifukwa ndiwokongola) (I wish to to have sex with my mother but am failing to do so because I don’t know how I can approach her) [since she is beautiful] Thokozani continued: Amfumu a Mudzi B anakwatrana ndi uncle anga koma nthawi imenyelo anali ndi mimba ya 2 months from another HB koma uncle anga samadziwa (chief Mudzi B got married to my uncle when she was already 2 months pregnant from another HB but my uncle didn’t know about it) after staying 6 months she gave birth to child. Then my uncle said that zatheka bwanji kubereka mwana miyezi 6 osati 9, (how come you give birth in 6 months instead of 9,) after some quarrels the HB decided to divorce

Munda wanga anandipatsa ndi amfumu a Mudzi B koma panopa akufuna kundilanda mundawo chifukwa banja ndi uncle anga linatha (said Thokozani) (chief Mudzi B is the one who gave me the field, but as of now she want to take the field back because the marriage with my uncle ended)

Thokozani continued: Agulupu Mudzi B ndi mfiti anatenga mankhwala ndikuthira pamutu pa Kondwani kuti ndi cholinga choti amuna asamamufunsire akamuwona adziwona ngati nyani (Group Mudzi B is a witch she took traditional medicine and poured on Kondwani’s head so that men should stop proposing her because of the medicine men see her as a monkey) that’s why the marriage ended. The HB was saying that masiku ano sukwoneka wokongola ngati kale sindingathe kuyenda nawe pa nseu (you are not looking beautiful nowadays compared to the past and I can not walk in the street with you) (then HB divorced

At 5:10 pm the rain started & Thokozani went back home. I continued knitting alone up to 7:10 pm

5 Dec 2008

In the morning when I get up I started cleaning the house after that I went to fetch some water but I was with Innocent then she started saying that grandson of my mother (Davie) bought blouse, underwear for his girlfriend but through ganyu and I am not happy instead of going to school, he is just staying but his girlfriend is in standard 6, he don’t have enough soap but giving to his girlfriend, when we were coming from the borehole I met with GVH carrying 25 kgs of maize but I don’t know where she bought

At 10:30 1 went to talk with Grace & on the way I saw Elube making zigumu & women from Mudzi B was busy buying & Jasmine also was busy making Zigumu (maize flour cakes)

Grace
Not started planting she is waiting for the rains to come but she will plant maize (local) nandolo (pigeon peas) maungu (pumpkin) (she kept all the seeds)

Fertilizer not bought but next week (I already kept the money) uncle anga anandipatsa ku Mzuzu (my uncle gave me at Mzuzu), coupon received and shared with Haliday

Ndizangosakaniza chifukwa ndi ochepa (I will just mix when applying because its not enough)

Mammawa -mango (break fast mangoes)
Masana - nsima + nandolo (lunch nsima and pigeon peas) > all kept

Madzulo - mpunga + tea (dinner rice and tea) > kept when she bought in Mzuzu in Jan 2008

*I tried to ask her what she was doing in Mzuzu but she just said that I went to see my uncle

On the way back home I met with Dorica and Ada coming back from ganyu (kupalira) (weeding) at K. village 30t per phando (per planting station)

And I saw 3 boys and 4 young girls doing ganyu in the field of Jasmine but I don’t know where she got the money to pay them, 30t phando. [HB paid, said T later]

At 12:40 I went to check my bicycle if it was ready, then on the way I met with Livia going to Suset & she was saying that alangizi (extension worker) from CUMO came and told them they will not give them loans but she didn’t ask why! Still on the way I saw Chikondi (pregnant) with the same man sitting together on the verandah

When I reached to [Bicycle maker], I found the bicycle not yet finished he said that he used the money (MK1500) by hiring ganyu people in the field (kupalira) (weeding) he told me to check him on Saturday afternoon

On the way back home I found Rosemary crying & some people were saying that one of her relatives died at Ch. village I just saw 2 women going there.

At 4:00 I started knitting but no one else joined me (they were busy in their fields)

Most of the people started kupalira on 4th Dec Said some women who were coming back from the borehole

6th Dec 2008

In the morning I went to fetch some water then at the borehole I heard Jasmine telling her friend that in the morning she just cooked Phala (porridge) for grandchildren while others ate zigumzi (maize flour cakes). And at the borehole I saw Lovely replanting maize on her field on the way back I heard Thokozani telling her friend that I am going to plant cotton with my HB after breakfast I started knitting then Fatima was passing by & she was telling Livia that Ndayamba kupalira (I have started weeding) then Livia said that ndiyamba mawa panopa ndikudzala mtedza (I will start tomorrow because as of now I am planting ground nuts), GVH and her HB were also replanting maize

After lunch I went to check my bicycle then on the way I saw Jasmine & her HB replanting then, still on the way I met with Innocent & she started saying that I went at [nearest trading center] yesterday with Sofia then my brother gave me MK800, for me to buy soap. Then I asked Innocent that how much money did your brother gave to his wife Sofia? Then Innocent said that: palibe (didn’t believe that it was her brother who gave her MK800 instead of giving his wife, I continued my journey then on the way I saw mother of Dorica replanting maize Mr. Ntawanga & wife replanting maize Rashida was also replanting maize and Maungu (pumpkin)

When I reached to the old woman I found the bicycle not ready then I just turned back because
there was some thunders & lightening (Signs of rainfall) on the way back I saw a group of 5 boys working in a certain field (kupalira) (weeding) and they were discussing that kumunda kwa amayi tidzawhandiza mammawa koma masana ku ganyu (tomorrow morning I will help my mother working in the field but in the afternoon I will go for casual labour)

0514 At 3:00 I went to fetch some water then I saw HB of Amila doing kupalira (weeding) alone from there I started knitting & no one else joined me at 7:30 pm slept

0515

0516 7th Dec 2008

0517 When I got up in the morning I saw GVH and her grandchildren making ridges then Rosemary & her HB passed by going to the field, Then later on I saw Thokozani and her HB going to the field at 9:00 I saw Emra making ridges alone in the field

0518 At 9:30 I started knitting then Thokozani joined me and she was saying On 8 Dec Muslims will be celebrating that they have finished fasting (for 9 days) and people from other villages will gather and eat together

0519 After few minutes she begged some vegetables from the garden then I gave her

0520 From there I continued knitting and people were still replanting (Lovely) (Rosemary and chief Mudzi B)

0521 After lunch Jasmine called me she said that she was making zigumu (maize flour cakes) then I should go and see when I went there I found Sofia complaining to Innocent that amuna anga sakundipatsa chithandizo chokwanira mwananso akudwala koma sakundithandiza kumusamala, (my HB is not taking good care of me, my child is also sick and he is not helping me to take care of the child), Then Innocent answered that ali ndi akazi ambiri ndiye olo apeze ndalama amafuna kupatsa mkazi aliyense pangonopango ( he has a lot of wives and when he finds money he share with all the wives, giving everybody a little) (I found them eating nsima with masamba (vegetables)

0522 Then 2 daughters of Elube passed by with plate’s full basin to clean at the borehole

0523 After few minutes Sofia was talking to HB of Fatima saying that “akazi anu Ali kuti?” (where is your wife) then HB of Fatima said that Ndawathamangitsa sayambana”adzabweranso (we quarreled and I have chased him but he will come back) after three weeks (but he didn’t explain what they quarreled

0524 As we were chatting Jasmine said that most of time mother of Charity used to encourage her daughter Saiba to start finding her own food while they are still young for example she was encouraging her daughter Saiba to start searching her own food before she gets married, Even Charity she started cooking her own food before she got married, Jasmine continued by saying that Zimenezi zimapangitsa Ana kuti akwatire nsanga nthowi yawo isanakwane. Ine sindingachite (this makes young children to get married earlier before there time as for me I cant do it)

0525 At 2:30 the rain started then I went back home it stopped at 3:45

0526 At 4:00i went to take my bicycle then I went on the way I met with chief Mudzi A going to his field to replant when I reached to the old woman I found that the bicycle ready and I was very happy, then I went straight to the grocery just to check who was selling then I saw a woman selling in the grocery & I new woman selling tomatoes only but those women and girls we talked to were not selling any
thing I greeted the 2 women & I told them that ndibwera mawa kudzacheza nanu” (I will come tomorrow to chart with
you) it was already 5 oclock that’s why I failed to talk to them I didn’t take follow up questions

On the way back I found the old woman (Eveles ) eating nsima with Masamba (vegetables). still
on the way the old woman (Chenawe) called me she said that I want to buy I chipewa for my
grandson and my HB wants to buy 1 for him, then they gave me the money [500MK - G comments
that she thinks in the beginning people were hiding that they have some money], still on the way I
found Sofia eating nsima with masamba. But still around 5:30 people were busy working on their
field (Livia, chief Mudzi A, Elube, HB of Fatima, Mr. Ntawanga )

I saw Chikondi with the same man pakhonde (on the veranda) around 5:30

8th Dec 2008

In the morning when I waked up I started kupalira (weeding) then Esmart passed by then she told
me that: Lero sindinapite kumunda tikukapephera (I will not go to the field because iam to pray)
(celebrating that they have finished fasting for this year)

At 10:003 women passed by then they came home to see zipewa (hut) after that they started
introducing themselves to me

Timakhala kwa [nearest primary school], tikupita kwa [small crossroads market] tinatenga ngongole za MADEF ndiye
mzathu wina sanamalize ku bweza nongoole ndiye tikupita kumeneko, Anthu a ku MADEF akubwera, ifeyo
timagulitsa mowa wa kachasu pena timagulitsa kwambiri koma nthawi zina pangono poti kuli njala njala (we stay at
[nearest primary school] and we are going at [small crossroads market], we took some loan from MADEF then one
of our friend didn’t finish paying back the loan, then we are going to meet her because people from MADEF are
coming , we sell traditionally distilled beer, sometimes we sell a lot of beer but sometimes we sell alittle because it is
hunger season ),after 30 minutes they continued their journey

At 11:00 I saw some people coming back from the mosque & Chenawe was with her friends
& they were discussing that the world is going to an end because there is no enough rainfall
comparing to last year, And daughter of Kondwani was telling her friend that Today nsima
ndiwo nyemba nyemba (relish beans)and her friend daughter of (chief Mudzi B) said that ife
tikungodya nsima ndiwo thelele kuyambira dzulo (we are just eating nsima and the relish is
okra since yesterday) (they laughed and shake hands) --> J: beans are considered better

After lunch at 1:40 Thokozani came to knit & she started complaining that amuna anga akuti
sindikusamala mwana wawo. koma ndinawawuza kuti “mwanawo amakhala ndi agogo ake ndiye
ndingamusamale bwanji? (my HB is saying that I am not taking good care of of his child , but I told
him that his child stays with his/her grandparents then how can I take care of the child) she
continued by saying that mwanayo amati akadya nsima kwa agogo ake amabweranso kwathu
kuzadya (that child eats nsima to his/her grand parents then he/she also comes to eat again at my
house), I have started getting worried & I have seen that its not good to get married to a HB who
has got children from another wife, because anything else that I can do, it seems as if I am
mistreating his daughter

At 3:30 I went to grocery to check who is selling then on the way I saw the same man with Chikondi and
I heard Mr. Ntawanga that Chikondi has got 2 boys (twins)

Still on the way I met with the old woman (Eveles) coming back from the Mosque, Then she started
explaining that I was selling tobacco and stopped. But as of now I have also started but no-one else
comes to buy because they forget that I sell tobacco, its four months now since I stopped (we all
laughed) she continued by saying that maybe I should put a certain sign in order to remind them
that I have also started selling tobacco

After few minutes I continued my journey, then at the grocery I just found I woman selling usipa (small dry fish)

Market woman Gayipa, 1976, J. village

2 Sometimes I sell tomatoes but especially usipa (small dry fish) (now)

3 Since 2007 we all decided chifukwa cha mavuto ndiye tinakambirana (because of problems then we discussed), HB gave me MK450 to start a business then I started selling I had enough money I stopped and started selling usipa buying at MK650 (5l) selling at MK800 buying at Liwonde turn off

4 Zinazo sindingakwanitse ndi chifukwa chake ndinayamba ya usipa (I can not manage to run other businesses that's why I started the business of selling small dried fish)

5 Ndimagulitsa pompano kapena kunyumba lolemba -lachisanu (I sell here at the market or at home from Monday to Friday)

Saturday - HB goes to church

Sunday-I do go to church

6 650-800 I use to buy maize, mchere (salt), paraffin, matches, ndiwo timakambirana ndi abambo (when I want to buy relish I discuss with my HB)

7 Ndayiwala chaka chomwe tinakwatirana (I have forgotten the year that we got married)—mwana ndayiwala chaka chomwe anabadwa koma omaliza 2000. Ndi banja loyamba anandipeza pakhomo, ndiye ankandifuna Banja, anayendera (I have forgotten the year that my child was born but the last born child was born in 2000, this is my first marriage and he found me at home and he proposed about marriage, he proposed me for) for 1 week, I was refusing because we belonged to different churches

* Ndinavomera kumutsatira ku mpingo wake (P.I.M) I accepted to follow him at his church after that I week we got married. But as of now my HB started praying at Seventh Day Baptist But I don’t know why. And I am still going at P.I.M church

Anandiwuza kuti ndili ndi ufulu kumapemphera kulikonse (he told me that I have the right to pray at his church or my church)

Good HB because amandigulira zovala komanso chakudya akapeza ndalama amagula (he buys clothes for me and d when he has money he buys food) (through ganyu (casual labour)) no other wives

8 Nine children but four died five staying in the family

HB + wife + three children but other two children are staying with my mother (grandmother)

* we also find money through ganyu (casual labour) + selling cotton >no ganyu hired now (no enough money)

9 Std 3, school fees no & no school uniform amatibweza (they send us back when we don’t put on school uniform)

10 Ndimasowa ndalama zogulira zovala, soap, mchere, chakudya koma panopa zonzezi ndimatha kugula (I don’t have money to buy soap salt, food, but as of now I am able to buy myself)

11 No disadvantage

12 Anthu amanena ali ndi mavuto ndi amene amaganiza zoyamba geni, ena amakhala aulesi, ena manyazi (those people who have problems are the ones who think of starting business, others are lazy, while others are shy)
When coming back from the grocery I met with Hamra then I greeted her & she started saying that in the morning I went for ganyu (casual labour) in a certain village 30t per phando -1 worked for MK270 & I have kept the money (she carried a bag of salt) she continued by saying that this afternoon I was thinking that I will work in my field but am tired and I decided to be moving around selling this salt 20kwacha per small plate exchanging with maize 1 bought this after selling cotton (3-4 bags 25 kg) but as of am deciding to keep this salt [bcoz people are not buying now] and give some people In January. So that when they will be harvest they should give me some maize (exchanging salt-maize) 

After that she continued her journey, still on the way I found Innocent making ridges and planting cotton & she started saying that Fatima banja lake latha akuti anakumba mayenje [holes] pankhomo kuti mwamuna akawerwa usiku agwe (the marriage of Fatima ended because she dug some holes near her home so that when the HB come at night should fall down) (Fatima started thinking that maybe her HB found another wife somewhere because he used to come at mid night everyday Then the HB chased (Innocent laughed & said if he can propose me I can agree (she was happy that maybe this would be her chance to find a HB, Perceived Fatima was the lucky one to have a HB)

In the morning I went to fetch some water then I saw four young boys working in the field of Jasmine (ganyu kupalira) (weeding casual labour) then at the borehole I found Livia & Chisoni they were discussing that (Livia: bwenzi pano ndikukhala kwanu koma amayi ndi omwe ankakaniza (I could have been staying at your place, but my mother is the one who ignored), That man is now staying in S.A and he married another wife and you Chisoni your HB is in S.A) bola inu mukupeza soap (at least you are able to find soap) .During chibwenzi (our relationship) we were going together at Balaka for shopping's soap, lotion, clothes, ndiwo (relish) but my mother said that we belong to the same village & its not good, That means we will not be respecting one another [Elder brother of Chisoni's HB = son of Fissa, could have been Innocent's HB, if Phingi had not refused, Livia says regrettingly], from there I saw Ada coming back from their field with her mother

At home I saw Elube working alone on her field (kupalira) (weeding) and Lovely was also coming back from the field

After few minutes Innocent came and she asked me to go with her & see zigumu (maize flour cakes) made by Auleria, on the way Innocent started saying that Suset was married to her brother [=owner of Suset's first child] who is staying in J. village but they divorced because one day he found her with another man in the house cheating that he was a customer who came to buy beer (kachasu) (traditionally distilled beer) Still on the way I saw chief Mudzi B & Kondwani preparing thelele for nsima. Then Sofia was buying matemba (dry fish) for MK60 (man passing by then we found Auleria making zigumu for sell. Then Innocent, Ad, Grace were buying. on the way back home I saw HB of Jasmine working on his field (kupalira) and Innocent bought vegetables MK40 & she said that my mother also is making zigumu, Then I wanted to differentiate the quality and price

After lunch I saw mother of Dorica & Auleria going to the field to replant & kupalira (weeding)

At 2:30 I went to fetch some water then I saw Thokozani cooking some mangoes she was telling her
mother that she don’t have ufa (still the HB didn’t buy fertilizer said Thokozani).

Later on at 4:30 pm Phingi came & she was complaining that other people are doing ganyu in order to get some soap but Livia is just waiting for me to give her everything nsima + lotion & her children but when I will die she cry loudly because she is failing to take care of herself & her children

**10th Dec 2008**

In the morning I started applying fertilizer after that I started clearing at the garden then I heard Jasmine telling Innocent to make phala *(porridge)*

At 8:00 Jeneti was passing by going to the field then talking to Lovely saying that yesterday I ate phala mammawa -masana ate nsima-madzulo I ate zigumu instead *(ate porridge in the morning, lunch ate nsima, and dinner ate maize flour cakes)* of nsima. Then Lovely answered that zimachitika nthawi ino ndiyosowa chakudya *(it happens because this time is difficult to find food)*, after that I saw children of Elube+ Lovely + HB of Fatima working on the field of Elube & they were discussing that tomorrow tikalima munda wa Lovely kenako munda wa HB of Fatima *(we will work in the field of Lovely then at the field of the HB of Fatima)* then I saw Livia making ridges alone in the field.

At 9:00 I saw Jasmine + HB *(kupalira on her field)* *(weeding)* then GVH + HB making ridges up to 11:00. Then I saw Sofia carrying thelele she was telling Trinity *(granddaughter of Jasmine to go to the maize mill*

I saw chief Mudzi B passing by with masamba *(ndiwo)* *(vegetables relish)* then at 10:30 Ada came then she was saying that my mother wants to cook zigumu *(maize flour cakes)* today for sell-we went for ganyu then I found MK200 and my mother MK300 then I gave that MK200 to my mother so that she can have in order to start that business

Then Thokozani came at e1:30 and she was saying that I went for ganyu at K. village kupalira alone 30t phando *(weeding alone 30t per planting station)*, Then this afternoon at 3:30 pm I will go with my HB to work on our field, she continued by saying that some people are working on their field from 5 morning - 2 o’clock afternoon *(Amila + HB-Kondwani - Auleria)*. Although they are working more hours but they just work for a small part of the field. But I went to work on my field yesterday *(kupalira at 5:00 and I came back at 8:00 but I am the one who worked for a big part of the field (she laughed)*

She added by saying that I am still dreaming g Mudzi B giving me some meat to eat but I used to refuse although she forced me. And most of the people are suspecting that GVH is the one who making some medicine for the rain not to come, because she has not yet finished making ridges *(this also happened last year)*

Ayama is also doing something for the rain no to come, because she was telling some people at the borehole that the rain will come soon after finishing putting my iron sheets on the roof

Then *(mother of chief Mudzi B)* because she wants to finish kupalira *(we all laughed)*
Then Livia joined us & she started saying that the man who is in S.A who wanted to marry me sent a greeting through the one who has come from S.A and he said that he is coming soon & he will give me something (son of Fissa)

Thokozani didn’t answer anything she just said that Ainessi her elder sister gave birth to 3 babies but 2 died. the other one died when he was playing with her friends (2 years) but the hyena came and caught him. They searched everywhere but no where to be seen. The following day they went to police and the police came to help them then they found the dead body very far near the lake but some bones (skeleton) only the other child also died when he was still young not ill

Thokozani continued by saying that I heard people saying that at Admarc they will be selling mphale (grinded maize for making white flour) & if they will found a vendor selling mphale he/she will be in prison. AT 2:15 the rain started. At 5:10 Innocent come to continue knitting & she was saying that pepani ndabwera mochedwa (sorry that I came late because) husband of Fatima came he told me that he wants some nsima then I was cooking for him & I just took some eggs that my mother kept for her husband & he was happy that cooked some nsima for him at 5:30

Innocent departed

At 6:20pm Fatima came to greet me & she started explaining that my husband is searching for another wife I heard this from my friends & decided to divorce but I will be staying with my n\mother, koma (but) with my relative today in order to discuss this issue and my husband said that its good to divorce & I am happy that we have divorced. But I will be coming to continue knitting after few minutes she left & Tinenenji came to greet me & she was saying that sorry am busy now weeding that’s why I m failing to come &knit panopa ndikulima mmunda mwa amuna anga. Ineyo ndilibe munda amfumu sanandipatse (as of now am working in my HBs field but as for me I don’t have a field because the chief didn’t give me) . I don’t know why!

At 7 PM Jasmine passed by & she shouted greeting me. Then she told me that ndikuchokera kwa J. village uja ndimakapempha ufa kwa amayi koma andipatsa madeya (Maize grain) komanso loan tilandira pa 16 Dec amatero a langizi (I am coming back from J to beg some maize flour to my mother but just gave me maize grain flour, but we will also receive loan on 16 Dec said the extension worker) (she speaking loudly while passing by)

At 10:00 I went to fetch some water then I heard Esnart complaining to her friends that she is tired eating therere then masamba. at 12:00 o’clock I started cooking then at 2 o’clock I started knitting but no one else joined me

At 3:00 I went at [small crossroads market] (market day) then on the way I met with Innocent knitting chipewa (hat). Then I asked her the owner of that chipewa, then she answered that its for the husband or Fatima he told me to make it. Then I continued my journey still on the way I saw Chikondi sitting on the verandah with the same man

11 Dec 2008

In the morning when I waked up I started cleaning the house and clearing at the garden then I saw Livia making ridges on the her field and planting Cotton. Then after few minutes I saw g Mudzi B + husband + granddaughters too including Sofia working on the field making ridges but husband was planting Cotton.
At [small crossroads market] I saw only 2 women selling tomato (we talked to them already) four men selling clothes one woman & three men selling dried fish and usipa (small dried fish).

I asked the one who sales tomato about the woman who sales Zitenje & she said that she is now at Balaka not here.

1 Mary, 1952, [small crossroads market] village

3 Ndinayamba Kalekale nsika wa [small crossroads market] usanayambe ndinaganiza ndekha kuti ndizipeza chithandizo cha ana capital through ganyu (I started long time ago before they opened sawali market, I decided to start a business on my own so that I should be able to buy what my children need, I found capital through casual labour).

4 Sizimaonongeka msanga (it doesn’t rot quickly)

5 Ndimagulitsa pompano koma nthawi zambiri amandigulitsira mwana wanga ine ndimakhala ndikugwira nthawi za pakhomo (I sell here but sometimes I send my child to sell while iam home doing household chores), Sales Monday-Friday

6 Matemba (dry fish) buying at MK400 selling at MK5000 sometimes at MK700 profit

7 Ten children (all alive) amuna anga anandifunsira ndikukhala ndi makolo ankandifuna banja koma ndinkakana for a month chifukwa ndinali waamngono. Koma panthawiyi omakolo amene anankati ndikwati. Ankandifuna kuti ukukana chifukwa chiani ?ukufuna uzingoyendayenda ndiyiye ndinavomera kukuwatiwa (my HB proposed me when I was staying with my parents, he proposed marriage but I refused for a month, because I was very young at that time. My parents were the ones who forced me to get married, they asked me why I was refusing to get married," you just want to be moving around", then I just accepted to get married)

8 Its my first marriage. Good husband because timalima limodzi ali ndi chikondi (we work together in the field and he loves me), I go to Mlangeni Ntcheu to buy some tomato for sale while other husband cannot agree, they can think that I will be with other men there (no other wives)

Four children + wife + husband my mother she is very old she cannot manage to take care of herself

*We also sell cotton, maize, and g/nuts after harvesting

9 standard 5 (no fees)

10 Ndikuntha kugula ndiwo sopo, clothes ndi mchere (I am able to buy relish soap and salt)

11 NO any disadvantages

12 Anthu ena ndi aulesi, koma amene amapanga bizinesi ndi amene ali ndi mavuto (others are lazy but those who do business are the ones who have problems)

13 MADEF, Cuma, ine sindimatenga ngongole chifukwa ndimaona mwa chiwambo ena anayambizinesi koma anasiya vuto ndi lakuti timapangira bizinesi kumudzi anthu ambiri ndi achibale amawbera kuzakongola koma amatenga nthawi yayitali kuti abwezere [relatives take some merchandise and say they will pay later] kenako pangono ndi pangono (I don’t take loan because for example others started Bs and stopped, the problem is that we do Bs in our village where a lot of relatives stay then instead of buying they just come and borrow, then they take long time to pay back, then little by little the business goes down then at the end no profit) no profit then you stop doing bizinesi & no money to pay back (she said to her friend near by that lero mowa wanga anthu
After that I saw another woman selling Mangoes then I went there to talk to her and she said that am just selling today only because I don’t have money to buy soap & most of them they don’t have mangoes now(finished)from there I saw a certain woman selling clothes, shoes, string plastic papers then I went there to talk to her

2 Chrissy 1974 from [clinic] village

I sell here but I sent the money to the owner of the business &he gives me some money to buy soap, ndiwo (relish) & lotion, my husband died in 2003

One child 8years now but I get support through Assemblies of God Church

Business ya zovala siyikuyenda anthu sakugula alibe ndalama komanso mvula sitikuntha kugulitsa (business of selling second hand clothes is not doing good people are not buying because they don’t have money and also because of rainfall we are failing to sell)

I didn’t continue asking her because it was not her business after that I went back home

At home Victoria was passing by with her friend (girl friend of grandson of Jasmine) then she was complaining to Victoria that Masiku ano Davie sakundilankhulitsa komanso wasiya kundipatsa ndalama Victoria said iweyonso wasiya kumukonda. girlfriend :Ayi akukana kuti tidzicheza. ( nowadays Davie stopped talking to me and he also stopped giving me some money, then Modesta said “you have also stopped loving him”? No, he is refusing to chat with me) Victoria: mwina wapeza mkazi wina ( may be he has found another wife)

I didn’t get everything because they were passing by

12 Dec 2008

In the morning when I waked up I saw Livia making ridges alone in the field, then GVH and husband were replanting g/nuts, then I saw Thokozani & husband going to the field. The same morning Phingi came &she started saying that she sent her son to buy some tomato at Lizulu for sale then he bought for Mk1700 & she sent Livia to sale at [nearest tradingcenter] and she sent her grandson to buy Nandolo (pigeon peas)MK100 & Khobwe MK50 to plant at 8:00 my mother called me & she said that she don’t have ufa (maize flour) , she already finished what she harvested & I went there at Dedza but I departed at 9:00 and on the way I saw mother of Tinenenji making ridges on her field (alone) on the way to Balaka depot I saw many people in another village weeding on their field from Balaka boma (district) up to Dedza there was rainfall & people were also busy weeding when I reached home (Dedza ) Kapenuka village I found my mother weeding alone in the field. she greeted me & she explained that she finished her maize on 2 Dec. then the money for potatoes she used to hire some ganyu people (making ridges )she continued saying that the maize is growing quickly and the rainfall is enough but the problem is that people in the village don’t have enough fertilizer. then I gave her
MK3,800 to buy 40kgs of maize at Dedza its MK56 per kg. I asked her if my elder sister who was staying in Lilongwe got married and she said that she is not married she is just busy working on her friend & doing ganyu (casual labour) in the afternoon. I told her to buy fertilizer to add what she had she also explained that nowadays she is weak and she cannot go for ganyu that’s why she called me to help her with some money to buy food & extra fertilizer, I didn’t give her a lot of money because am keeping the money to pay at school. but I promised her that I will be sending money little by little to be buying food

0620  She was happy because I visited her but I didn’t see my elder sister because they went for ganyu and other went to work on their field, She gave me some fresh beans, pumpkins & vegetables from dimba (garden)

0621  At 1:00 I departed because I was afraid that it was already hunger season & people can steal ufa on the way some people were very busy weeding. I reached here in Mudzi B at 5:10pm then I found mother of Tinenenji still making ridges & Jasmine was busy making zigumu (maize flour cakes). Then Jasmine came & she was saying that

0622  Agulupu anabwera kunyumba amati abwerake njinga akufuna apite ku Balaka akatenge nyama mwanawatumiza kuchokera ku S.A ndiye ndawakaniza chifukwa munthu sangatumize nyama kuchokera ku S.A koma ndalama (GVH came at home to borrow the bicycle, she wanted to go to Balaka to take some meat that her son sent from South Africa, then I refused to borrow her because someone cannot send some meat all the way from South Africa! ) (we all laughed & departed

0623  13 Dec 2008

0624  In the morning when I waked up I started cleaning the house. I failed to go to church because of the members of church came home to tell me that that no service today people will go to someone else who is sick but it is very far (then I didn’t go)at 8:00 I listened to the radio news program & they were saying that a certain woman in Chitipa is in prison chifukwa anakangana nda mwamuna .Mzimayiyo sanathi mchere mundiwo chifukwa mamuna wakeyo amanthera ndalama mowa. (because of quarrelling with her husband the woman didn’t add some salt in the relish, she said that she did it because her husband always spent his money buying beer) then when the husband started eating there was no salt in the relish then he shouted to the wife (why she didn’t put some salt in the relish) chifukwa cha funsolo mkaziyo anakwiya mpaka kemuna mpaka kemutundu nthiti (ndi mtengo) (because of that question the wife became angry and started beating her husband with a stick and broke his limb )the police came & took the wife

0625  Then at 9:30 Livia came she was going to fetch some water then she started explaining that dzulo pamene ndinapita kwa [nearest trading center] kokagulitsa tomato ndinakumana ndi ex-husband [J: Livia 2 months pregnant of him when she decided to go back to her first HB in Balaka. He wanted to kill te baby, abort. After 8 months she left him again, and married 2nd HB, but he left her soon after] ndiye amati andimenya chifukwa ndinayamba bizinesi ndiye ndalama yoyambiro bizinesi wandipatsa ndi mwamuna wina ( when I went to sell tomato at [nearest trading center] yesterday, I met with my ex-HB and he said that he will beat me because I started business , that means that the money which I used to start my BS came from another man).Then I told him that the business is for my mother but I don’t really understand why he wanted to beat me chifukwa akandipatsa ndalama ndi MK200-MK250 ya soposopo koma ine yosindo indimakwanira. (because he only gives me 200—250 for soap but its not enough for me)after this Livia continued her journey to the borehole

0626  Then at 10:00 I saw HB of GVH planting cotton alone in the field then Ada was planting in the field of her young mother. At the same time Trinity (granddaughter of Jasmine) coming back from the maize mill & she was explaining to a certain woman that she bought maize for MK900-12kgs
MK75 per kg to vendors

At lunch I went to greet Jasmine and she explained that CUMO meeting will be held on 16 Dec. Then I told her that no problem I will go with you. then I saw GVH coming.

, Thokozani, Esnart coming back from their field (kupalira) (weeding)

Then GVH amagula tomatoe Jasmine amaphika nsima + therere, Sofia nsima + therere, Esnart come to buy soda + tomatoe for nkhwani (then GVH was buying tomatoe, Jasmine was taking a pot of nsima + okra out of fire, Sofia nsima and okra, Esnart came to buy soda and tomatoe for pumpkin leaves)

Still there Pamela came to buy soda and tomatoe for therere then Jasmine asked Pamela that I saw you with a certain man working on your field & I heard that you want to get married Pamela answered that (eya! Ndikudikira kuti aperere ndalama kwa amfumu yolowera mmudzi kenakotikwatiana (yes I am waiting for him to pay some money to the chief so that he should be accepted in this village, then we will get married) (Innocent laughed) then Tinenejini came to buy soda + tomatoe Then Pamela started explaining that Jeneti started making zigumu but very dirty some flies everywhere then people are not buying (we all laughed )then they all departed & I was with Innocent only. Then I told Innocent that I have got many customers (chipewa (hat) then I gave her 3 customers & she said no problem I will take some money from the husband of Fatima, I was also with him at [nearest tradingcenter] selling tomatoe. After few minutes Innocent left me with daughter then she went to husband of Fatima, she came back with MK200 & she told me that I will buy thread & start this business, kenako Innocent anawuza amayi ake kuti amugayire [please share = begging] thelele mumbale and nsima akamupatse (then Innocent begged okra to her mother in the plate and nsima so that she can give it to) husband of Fatima. then I didn’t heard what her mother answered.

Sofia said that mangoes are now finished we don’t know what we will be eating, then Dorica came to buy Tomatoe + soda for thelele (okra), Elube came to buy tomatoe tomato for bonongwe

After there I went to fetch some water there I found Tumanene cleaning a lot of plates & cups

At 3:00 Innocent came to knit & she started complaining that Davie (grandson of Jasmine) ali ndi chibwenzi mkaziwa kwa N. village komanso Libana (friend of Modesta) panopa akumakhala otanganidwa ndi ganyu kuti apezela ndalama zomawapatsa atsikanawo, koma bwino kumuwuza samamva. Kusukulu samapita mkaziyo (he has a girlfriend from Nd. village while he is also in relationship with Libana, as of now he is busy doing ganyu so that she can find money to give those girls, but this is bad, when we tell him he doesn’t listen, and the other girl doesn’t even go to school) (Libana std 5 winayo (the other one) std 6) Davie anasiya (stopped) std std 5 (Innocent laughed ).then after few minutes her mother called her to make porridge for her daughter then she departed

In the morning when I waked up I started washing my clothes then after that I started cleaning the house then after that I saw husband of GVH making ridges alone in the field.

Then I went to fetch some water & I found Jane making ridges alone in the field. then I saw Grace coming back from the field. then I asked Jane how she heard about blood testing at [clinic] village then she answered that a car was passing by announcing that people should go for blood testing, then Grace asked Jane that: why are you working alone in the field? Then she answered that ndikuphunzira kulima ndekha ndi cholinga choti chaka cha mawa ndidzalime munda wanga kukonzekera banja (I am learning to work on my own field so that next year I will work on my field preparing for marriage) (we all laughed) then Grace said that kodi chibwenzi ndi mnyamata wa ku S.A
zikuyenda ?then Jane answered that eya akubwera pa 16 Dec, akudzandipatsa ndalama ya sopo(is the relationship with the man from south Africa still going on, then Jane answered that yes, and he is coming on 16 Dec he is coming to give me money for soap) (Jane smiled )

When I came back from borehole Jasmine called me to buy zigumu then when went there I found her HB making ridges alone but she was also coming back from the field with Innocent (kupalira)then Innocent told me that there is a certain question that I want to ask you and I said that no problem you can ask

1-kodi munthu uli ndi chibwezi ndiye akukuuza kuti akufuna kugona nawe koma anthu asadziwelungatani? ( suppose you have a boyfriend and he is telling you that he want to have sex with you but other people should not know that we had sex. What can you do?)

2-komanso munthu ukukhala ndi makolo ako, ungawanathawe bwanji? ( you are staying with your parents, then how can you run a away from them?)

3-Innocent continued by explaining that HB of Fatima said that he wants to sleep with me he told me to go there at night, but he will marry me later on not now because the story of Fatima is not yet finished, then what can I do because am failing to run away from my parents at night so that I can go to HB of Fatimas house ? I told him that: ngati ukufuna kundikwatra uwaaze agogo ako ( if you want to marry me then you must tell your grand father)-then your grandmother will tell my grandmother then we will arrange for marriege

Innocent continued that I liked him because he works hard in the field & he told me that he liked me because we are neighbors. Mkazi amene anakwatirana naye ndi wammudzi wina mwina ndi chifukwa chake samamulemekeza, koma ineyo ndimakakhala pafupi (he married a woman who stays in another village may be that is why he don't respect her, but as for me I stay near by)(that means she has a better chance to become his wife) :then I answered Innocent that it is difficult for me to tell you what to do because you told me that you will not get married soon .Then you will see what to do yourself

At 10:30 I went back home to take some g/nuts to make nsinjiro (ground nuts flour) then on the way I met with chief Mudzi B coming back from the field carrying pumpkin vegetables for ndiwo (relish) & Hamra was going to fetch some water & she was explaining to chief Mudzi B that ndikuchokera ku ganyu ndikuchokera ku ganyu (I am coming back from casual labour then in the late afternoon I will work on my field). Then I found Livia going to Kraal(Pig) then I escorted her & on the way I saw Julia + HB kupalira (weeding) in the field, Then at the kraal Suset was talking to Livia that don't forget to come in the late afternoon around 5 then Livia said that mwina ndilephera chifukwa ndili ndi chichewa yotso ndikamafatsira ndikuchokera ku ganyu (I am coming back from casual labour then in the late afternoon I will work on my field). In the evening Livia told me that palibe vuto akamamwa mowa ndimakakhala pafupi (she wants some money so that I can buy thread 120MK then Suset said that “no probem I will tell him when he comes to drink beer” if he will give me that means I will give it to you) (they all smiled & shook hands, On the way back home we saw a certain tree then Livia started saying that when I was pregnant (second HB) I wanted to abort the child using this tree medicine then I failed (it was one and half month)there after I tried to take 15 panado & 5 quinine tablets but I failed and I was very weak, my mother took me to hospital & grandson of GVH but they didn’t know what I did then at the hospital the doctor ([nearest tradingcenter]) told my mother that amafuna kuchotsa mimba ndiyi walephera amayi anga sanandikalipire koma anati zimachitika koma ndisazachitenso (she wanted to abort but she has failed , my mother was not angry with me but she just told me that it happens and I should not do it again)when I reached home I started cooking then the rain started.

After the rains I saw HB of Jasmine planting cotton alone & HB of GVH making ridges alone & Elube + her daughter were also making ridges

At 2:50 I went to see the old woman (Evelles) and I was also going to maintain my bike there was a problem of chain after using for three days only, On the way I met with Rosemary and she started explaining that yesterday I didn’t eat, no ufa (no maize flour) , no salt my HB went to Balaka early in the morning to
Rosemary continued by saying that ndinakadandaula kwa achemwali awo kuti banja lithe chifukwa ndalama akuthera mowa komanso kumunda ndikumalima ndekha nthawi yaitali ndiye achemwali awo atawauza amuna anga anakana (I went to complain to his sister and I decided to end my marriage because he always spend his money buying beer and a part from that I am working alone in the field for along period of time, when his sister asked him about the whole story he refused). Rosemary stopped explaining because she saw the HB coming nearby, Still on the way I saw GVH replanting maize, Then I heard Jasmine complaining that almost 5 women are doing the same business even Hamra wants to start on 16 Dec. Then I heard Saibi saying that she will apply fertilizer on 15 Dec.

When I waked up in the morning I went to fetch some water then I saw HB of GVH working alone in the field & she explained to his friend that my wife is working in another field & my granddaughters+ son are also working in another field, Then I also met with Tinenenji, Thokozani & HB going to their fields. At 9:30 I went to see the 2 kids of Chikondi then on the way I met with Innocent coming back from the field then she started explaining that I would like sell my fertilizer half bag to my mother at MK1000 and she told me that she will give me MK500 but the other MK500 she will do ganyu in my field (ridges) with her HB, still on the way at 10:00 I saw Melina carrying a hoe & she told me that ndikuchokera kumunda anyamata aganyu sanamalize kupalira ndiye ndimakamaliza (I am coming back from the field, I employed some boys to do the weeding but they didn’t finish then I went to finish myself) , Then I saw Filimona & Hamra coming back from the maize mill (carried masamba + matemba everybody) Then I saw HB of Hamra making ridges alone when I reached to Chikondi’s house I found her with her with the same man +Mrs. Ntawanga + a woman (but new face) After greetings wife to Ntawanga started explaining that poyamba timadya 50kg for 2 weeks koma pano timadya 50kg for 3 weeks chifukwa atabwera Jannake & Getrude kutifunssa mafunso tinazindikira kuti timadya kwambiri sitisamala, Poto wankulu nthawi zONSE, Mwana waMgonwe mwaona mwaona koma pano tinasintha tikudya mambawo pangono, masana pangono, madzulo pena nsima kapena phala (at first we were eating 50kgs of maize per 2weeks but as now we eat 50kgs for 3weeks it is because when Jannaka and G asked us some questions we realized that we eat a lot, we misuse we always cook using a big pot all the time,a small child eating a lot of nsima, but as of now we have changed we eat allittle of food in the morning allittle food for lunch, for dinner we eat nsima or porridge then zione) then Chikondi laughed & said that inenso ndinasintha ndinawona kuti ndibwino kumadya pangono ndipo pano ndinasinolowa (I also changed because I realized that it is good to eat allittle , ) (we all laughed ndibwino kumayenda ma boma ena kuti tidziona momwe anthu amakhalira (we should copy the way on how other people live). Then Chikondi said that I didn’t know that I will give birth to twins for 8 months only but I am happy because I will manage to work on the field then the other woman answered that you are lucky because your HB is working on your field (Chikondi smiled ) on the way back I saw Rashida. her daughter replanting. then HB of Jasmine was also making ridges alone while Jasmine went to sell zigumu (maize flour cakes-lat small crossroads market), In the afternoon there was rainfall then I started knitting, At 3:00 I saw Sofia coming back from the field then Ada +her mother were also coming back from their field + HB of Fatima went to plant cotton alone in the afternoon,
At 5:00 Rashida + Filimona and Saibi were coming back from the borehole and they were discussing:

0653
Rashida: ndadzala soya (i have planted soya beans)
0654
Saibi: ine ndadzala koma sanamere (i have planted but it hs not yet germinated)

0655
Filimona: ine apongozi anga [mother-in-law] sanandipatse, anandinamiza kuti watha (my mother in law didn’t give me, but she just cheated me that its finished)

0656
At 5:40 I went to take my hoe that Jasmine borrowed then I found her cooking nsima + matemba (dry fish) & she started explaining that after selling zigumu at [small crossroads market] she started selling tomatoes by passing every house because there was rainfall & she sold almost half bucket

0657
Then I met with Ellesi she was going to buy tomatoes for masamba (vegetables) (said herself)

0658

0659
16 Dec 2008

0660
In the morning when I waked up I started weeding at the garden then I saw Livia clearing her field alone & HB of GVH was making ridges alone, After that I went to fetch water some water then I saw Jane planting in another field

0661
After breakfast I was waiting for Jasmine to go at [nearest primary school] to attend CUMO meeting, as I was waiting for her I heard on the radio(new program) saying that a certain woman in Balaka is just eating thelele (okra) morning, lunch, dinner no ufa (maize flour)

0662
At Admarc no maize, vendors are selling at high prices (but not true they wanted to make people not to vote for Bingu and somewhere else in Chitipa a certain man asked his mother in-law to sleep with her so that he can be rich! Then the mother in-law accepted (at kitchen) then after few minutes neighbors saw them and shouted then the medicine didn’t work properly because they didn’t finish everything that he was told by witch doctor

0663
At 8:30 Jasmine came and we were together on the way to [nearest primary school] then I saw Sweetness + HB+ a son kupalira kwawo (glasses not planted as she told me) heavy water still destroying the maize then I saw Alma, kupalira (weeding) alone in her field and 5 women ganyu (casual labour) in her field making ridges not women from Mudzi B but from other villages

0664
Still on the same way I saw Lizzie with 6 men+ 2 boys doing kupalira then on the way Jasmine complaining to Suset that kodi ndichifukwa chiyani mwana wako akupemphera katolika not Islamic (why is it that your child goes to church at catholic not Islamic) <then Suset answered that because I am married to another HB then I cannot allow my child to be going to Muslim alone while I go to catholic church and my ex HB is not helping me. Jasmine
continued by saying that teachers from [nearest primary school] used to rent a field but not paying the money in time almost 5 field per teacher, later on we will stop renting our field to them

AT [nearest primary school] people were discussing that at they have started selling rice at MK180 per kg while vendors are selling maize at MK100 per kg while one of the woman at [nearest primary school] said that ife timadya mammawha phala masana osaday koma madzulo nsima ndipo ana panopa anazolowera (we eat porridge in the morning no lunch but we eatnsima at dinner and my children are now used to eat like that) and Jasmine answered that we eat phala masana nsima madzulo nsima chifukwa amuna anga amati sangakwanitse kudya kamodzi chifukwa akulima kwambiri mmunda ( we eat porridge at lunch then nsima for dinner , this is because my HB said that he cannot manage to eat once a day because he works in the field)[other women laughed ]Suset answered by saying that ndinawona azibambo akudutsa atanyamula ufa from Balaka in packets akuti bola kugula mu shop (I saw men passing by and they carried maize flour  all the way from Balaka , they were saying that it is good to buy at the shop than buying to vendors) than vendors

When alangizi from CUMO came he started that money is not ready may be on 20 Dec then Jasmine complained that in January no business because there will be no ganyu then we will not manage to pay back why cant you just give us now since last of last month October up to now we are just waiting. Alangizi (the extension worker) said that musadandaule ndalama zibwera ( don't worry the money will come) Alangizi asked money for contribution as usual but everybody said sitipereka tidikira kaye ndalama zibwele (that we will not contribute till the loan come) , Then alangizi said that you can go back where you are coming from then I will tell you when to receive the money. But you need to contribute (others contributed while others didn’t). On the way back home I saw wife of Mr. Ntawanga doing ganyu in the field of the daughter of Alma + her 2 sisters then I saw Amila going back to the field at 12:10 alone then near the borehole Esnart cleaning vegetables (nkhwani (pumpkin leaves) + tomato then Tinenenji + Suset were buying tomato then Ada was explaining to Chikondi that I am tired I am coming back from the field (kupalira ) (weeding) but no ufa (maize flour) at home I saw HB of GVH still making ridges

At 1:20 I saw Jasmine, Innocent and HB making ridges in one field then Jasmine was explaining to her HB that I will take a loan of ten thousand, Suset 3000, Innocent 2000 ndiyamba geni ya matemba (I will start a BS of selling dry fish) said Jasmine, inayo nditumiza ku Zomba kwa mwana wanga andilimitsire mpunga (I will send the other money at Zomba where my dotta stays so that she must grow some rice for me) (HB laughed )

At 2:30 Innocent came and she started explaining that HB of Fatima came and he was telling me that mkazi wanga wabwera tikambirana ndiye ukamwena usadandaule koma iweyo ndi ineyo chibwenzi chilpobe ndizokussamalira (my wife has come but we will discuss it later, please don’t worry when you see her, but our relationship is still there, I will take care of you) . Innocent continued by saying that ndikanokhala kuti naye ndikanachita manyazi, ndinachita bwino kukana, koma zandiwawa (had it been that I was living with him I could be shy, but its good that I refused , but it is paining me) (sadface) [If I had been slept with him I would have been ashamed. I did good to refuse. But it makes me sad] then Innocent went back to the field

At 2:50 I went to greet Fatima then I found Elube cooking nsima & Fatima was explaining to her mother -in-law that amayi ananga andipatsa 35 kg (my mother gave me 35kgs) from what she harvested and Elube answered that nowadays we are just eating nsima + masamba a nkhwani, thelele, bonongwe (nsima and vegetables , pumpkin leaves, okra, bonongwe) and now I am going for a ganyu 30t phando (casual labour 30t per planting station) to my mother (Ayama). In my field and now am goin for ganyu (Fatima smiled ) Elube continued by saying that am happy that you are back Fatima said zimachitika (it happens) from there I went back home

At 3:40 Thokozani came to knit & she started explaining that I went in the morning to work on my field & this afternoon I cannot manage to go back because am tired but my mother (Rosemary wants to go for ganyu tomorrow at P. village the owner of the field said that he will pay goat meat to ganyu (those who did the piece work)) (kupalira) (weeding)
workers (kupalira) but not money then Thokozani laughed by saying that I cannot go there for ganyu because I cannot eat meat without nsima

After few minutes she departed she said that ndikukatenga masamba kumunda (iam going to take some vegetables at the field)

Then I saw Julia coming back from the maize mill with half dengu (basket)

17 Dec 2008

SMS: No mango's, masamba everywhere, enough rain now.

SMS 2: A lot of ganyu indeed, hunger not really, no maize at ADMARC but instead there is rice 180MK/kg. Vendors' maize at 100MK/kg.

In the morning when I waked up I saw HB of g Mudzi B making ridges alone, then Innocent was also making ridges alone. At 9:00 I saw chief Mudzi B coming back from the field

Then at 9:50 I escorted Livia to feed the pigs then on the way I saw HB of Julia weeding alone in the field, then near the kraal I saw Kima with four boys ganyu workers (kupalira) (weeding) then at the other side I saw Magda and two boys + HB weeding

On the way back Livia said that we will eat nsima + nkhwani (pumpkin leaves) . near home I met with HB of Thokozani coming back from the field alone

At lunch I saw Blessings carrying pumpkins leaf +some tomatoes after few minutes I went to fetch some water then I saw Emra cleaning some vegetables

Indeed at 7 Innocent came then she started explaining that pamene ndinali pachibwenzi ndi ex-HB amkatumiza njinga kuti ndimupeze kwa [nearest tradingcenter] ndiye wanjinga uja akandipeza ndili ndi amayi ndimawanamiza amayi aja kuti ndikubwera mnyamatayu akufuna kugula phone ndiye ineyo ndikudziwa munthu ali ndi phone ndiye ndikufuna ndimuperekeze (when I was in relationship with my ex–boyfriend, he was sending a bicycle to pick me at home, so that we should meet at mbera,when the cyclist come and find that I was charting with my mother, I was just cheating my mother that have you seen that guy? he wants to buy a phone then I am the one who knows where to get it, then I want to escort him), Then my mother was just accepting, At [nearest tradingcenter] my ex-HB was buying some soft drinks, kanyenya wa nyama tikatero tikagonera limodzi nyumba ya mnzake chifukwa yakeyo kunali mkazi wake (fried goat meat ,then after that we were sleeping together in the house of his friend becaus of his wife he was staying with his wife)

After few minutes HB of Fatima came and told Innocent that there is something that I want to tell you But Innocent refused to go out (I don't know why) then HB of Fatima sent a child (young boy) then the boy came by saying that Innocent akukufuna (innocent, you are wanted by) HB of Fatima. Still Innocent said sindikufuna (I don't want), then I asked her why she is refusing, then Innocent answered that zikundiwawa chifukwa chifukwa amandinamiza kuti andikwatira (it is paining me because he always cheat me that he will marry me), Then after few
minutes Innocent said that ndikupita ndinayiwala kuti amayi akudwala (I am going, I forgot that my mother is sick) then at 8:00 she left. I guessed that she was going to HB of Fatima.

0685 18 Dec 2008

0686 SMS: Thieves came I have seen this morning that they have taken my bag with some clothes that I kept there, flak, nali, my shoes, my 1 blanket, my underwear.

0687 At midnight of 17th December I was dreaming about someone else asking me where we put everything in the house I was just explaining everything in dreams. Later on at 3:45 I waked up and checked everything in the house, then I found the window opened my blanket, a bag some clothes, inside underwear thermostat, three plates, one basin, charcoal iron, some fish, chigumu (maize flour cake), bed sheets, a packet of rice, onions, oil, JCE + MSCE certificates fuel att certificates then I went at the sametime to tell Jasmine then she escorted me to GVH then after few minutes Emra came complaining that her radio is also stolen, And the police unit came, HB of Sweetness & I called the police at Balaka explaining what happened. then later on some boys moved around and they found a basin & 3 plates at the graveyard, after few minutes Grace came running with my book for the hospital+ charcoal iron +onion and flask Grace said that I have found this in a certain field after that I started cleaning the house then I found that some ufa (maize flour) was not there, beans, knife, some money for knitting MK1200

0688 Mr. Ntawanga and Mr. Chikombo chief Mudzi A and other people from the village came they moved around searching but they didn't find everything, except Levison and her mother in-law & I called the police for the second time and they said we will come and see, Then later on at 11 after waiting for along time I decided to go to Balaka police & explained what happened and Mr. Ntawanga, chief Mudzi A, Mr. Banda (police unit) escorted me at the police they asked me what happened, Then they gave me a paper to write what happened and what was stolen then they said they wanted to see my identity card & the address + phone numbers of ICRISAT after that they told me to wait for the police car so that they should escort me and the police asked me if there is someone else that am suspecting then I told them that I am suspecting Ndaba because at 6:pm he came home to greet me but he was looking direct my window looking at the graveyard then after that he left then in the morning some one else said that he met with him at 10 night with a big stick and a trouser in his hand, Then one who saw Ndaba said that I was going to steal some fish at [large commercial estate] as usual (I don't know his name). then the police told me to go back home they will come at 6 or 7pm, Then on the way back I saw Fatima weeding alone to the village of her mother then she greeted me & told me that I am again back to my mother I will tell u later still on the way Mr. Banda said that everyday midnight I used to go & buy fish at the lake then all times I used to meet with Ndaba just moving around alone, And I explained to my wife told Rosemary (son- in-law then Sigele said that he is a thief because

0689 He was chased at Ch. village because of stealing that's why he is not afraid of moving around at night when we reached I found some women waiting for me and asked what happened at night and I explained

0690 Then a certain boy came & he started saying that I saw a big foot at the grave yard & it is similar to
People waited for the police. They didn't go to work in their field because there was rainfall all day. I tried to call the police to remind them, then they said tikubwela tili munjira (we are coming we are on our way there). Around 7 pm, 5 police men came by car, then we went to F. village. When we reached there, we didn't find him. We tried to search everywhere, then the police said that we are going if you catch him just call, we will come to pick him. When the police went, one of the men in F. village said go at [nearest trading center] + HB of Amila + Banda. When we reached there, we didn't find him. We tried to search everywhere. Then the police said that we are going if you catch him just call, we will come to pick him. We ran away because we were afraid (we just had a string, but not a stick or knife). Then Mr. Banda said that let's go where he is staying and we went back to F. village. We found him there. We called him to come out of the house. Before asking him, if he is the one who has stolen, he just started shouting by saying that iwe Banda ndikuphani & (I will kill you, Mr. Banda) he took a big stick, but Mr. Banda didn't run away. Then he went to sleep. I called again the police, explaining what was still happening. They said we will come anytime, just watch him where he will be going either to the toilet, follow him. The same night, we waited for the police, but they didn't come.

Then Mr. Banda said that let's go where he is staying and we went back to F. village. We found him there. We called him to come out of the house. Before asking him, if he is the one who has stolen, he just started shouting by saying that iwe Banda ndikuphani & (I will kill you, Mr. Banda) he took a big stick, but Mr. Banda didn't run away. Then he went to sleep. I called again the police, explaining what was still happening. They said we will come anytime, just watch him where he will be going either to the toilet, follow him. The same night, we waited for the police, but they didn't come.

19 December

In the morning, I was still at F. village with Mr. Banda & HB of Amila waiting for the police. At 10:00, the police told that just hire a taxi and come with him here because all our cars are not here. More thieves in town because of Christmas season after hiring a taxi at [nearest trading center]. I told Ndaba to go with me and explain to the police if he didn't take anything then he answered that ndikufuna a police abwela kuno ndipite pa galimoto yawo inu mulibe manyazi, mwawamba kalekale kuwayimbira foni mukuwona ngati abwela(?). (I want the police men to come and pick me up by car, you people are not ashamed of yourself, you have been calling them for several times, do you think that they will come). Then I told Mr. Banda that I'm going to the police and explain. Then I left Ndaba with Chief F. village + HB of Amila and I went with Mr. Banda to the police. Then on the way, I met with the police car. Then I stopped them, and they told me that they were busy letting go and catch him when we reached at F. village. The Chief said that he has gone to buy ndiwo (relish) without knowing that he was running away. We went to [nearest trading center] with the police and searched everywhere but we didn't find him. The police told some boys at [nearest trading center] to search for him and took him to the police. They agreed. From there we went back to Mudzi B to explain to the group about what happened & on the way back, Mr Banda started explaining that at the lake, most of the women used to propose to men who sell fish by saying that kodi simutigulira chakumwa (are you not going to buy a drink for me)? Then, at lunch, they used to say tyeni mukatigulire nsima ku restraint (let's go to restaurant and buy some nsima for me) & some time most of the men used to accept, then at night, women used to say that mutha kubwera palibe vuto (you can come no problem). He continued by saying that this is the biggest problem with business women when they don't have enough mpambana (capital/money) they used to chart with different men in order to attract them by sleeping with them & gave them some money (HB of Amila laughed). Then Mr. Banda continued by telling HB of Amila that instead of kupalira (weeding) you are busy making ridges for cotton (he laughed) then after selling your cotton, you will not think of buying maize for food (he laughed). Most of the people are growing cotton one acre while maize half acre, what are you going to be eating? Later on every year, you will just be doing ganyu said Banda when...
we reached home we found people from Mudzi A and Mudzi B gathered waiting for us to tell them the results. Then Mr Banda explained everything of what happened. Then GVH said that may be you should stop making zipewa (hat) for boys because they can be coming as if they want to buy while they are checking the surrounding. At night I slept alone but I was still afraid that may be other men from other villages will be coming to steal

20 Dec 2008

Early in the morning women came to greet me from Mudzi B & Mudzi A they just asked if no-one else came to disturb me. They were just complaining that Chisoni, Livia, Kondwani, Chief Mudzi B, Sofia chaka chino kuli njala yambiri chifukwa ganyu akuvuta kumupeza ndiye akuba akukhala ambiri leronto sitipita kumunda chifukwa kuli mvula yambiri tidzingodya masamba popanda nsima (there is a lot of hunger this year and you can see that it is difficult to find piece work, that's why we have a lot of thieves and today we will not go to work in the field because we have a lot of rainfall, therefore we will be just eating vegetables without nsima)

Livia- Ife tikumadya usiko okha Ufa ndiochepa (we are only eating dinner because we don't have enough maize flour) Chief Mudzi B-ife tikumadya phala Pena nsima (we are just eating porridge sometimes nsima)

GVH: ndilibe ufa bwanji mundipatseko pangono ndikaphike phala (I don't have maize flour can you give me alittle so that i can make some porridge)

I gave her just a small plate because I didn't have enough

At 10:00 I saw HB of group Mgwria planting cotton but it was still raining then Livia started making ridges and I saw Jeneti & her daughter planting maungu (pumpkins)

At 10:30 I went to charge my phone then on the way I didn’t see anyone else working in the field. there was rainfall at the grocery I just found a new woman selling tomato at 2 for MK20 I asked her if it was her first time to sell & she said that ndimagulitsa kwina kulikonse komanso ndimatenga loan ya (i sell at any place and I also take loan) for CUMO then I didn’t take the question paper & I failed to ask her a lot of questions (on 19 Dec at [nearest tradingcenter] when I was with the police men I just saw one woman selling tomato (the one we interviewed) one woman selling green maize (fresh) one woman was selling g/nuts & inside the market only one woman selling vegetables and few girls selling mandasi and zigumu. One man selling second hand clothes, five men selling new clothes there was only few men +women +young girls selling and buying

At 3:00 I started knitting alone and I came up with the idea to stop making zipewa (hut) for boys because they can be coming as if they want to buy while checking where to pass by at night

Then indeed i stopped. At 4:00 I went to take my phone then I met with Mr Ntawanga + HB of Fatima & they explained that they were coming back from ganyu (kupalira) (casual labour weeding) in the field of Alma. At the grocery I didn’t find anyone else selling, only 1 shop then I went back home

At 6:30 Jasmine came and she said that I will be there with you at night said my HB because the
GVH said that there is security here but not

Then at 6:40 the police called me and they told me to go & tell GVH to take 6-7 strong boys to
be moving around at night or afternoon searching for HB of Sakina, the police continued by saying
that the chief have got the responsibility to tell his boys what to do not you Getrude because you're
a woman you cannot manage to catch a thief but boys. I went to tell GVH but she just accepted
without telling the boys about what the police said

At night I was with Jasmine & Kingsley in the house & Jasmine was just complaining that most of
the thieves use tree medicine when they want to steal; they make the body of someone very weak
to asleep so that they can manage to steal

She continued by saying that she ate nsima +masamba there was still rainfall then Jasmine slept
while I was knitting, after that I slept because I was also tired

**21 Dec 2008**

SMS: He is still running away, only 1 man in the vil is helping me, am tired bcoz some strong men
from our & other vilgs needs money like ganyu. U know Malawian police they like bribes but I
cannot do it bcoz it’s their dury others are also including HB of Thokozani.

In the morning when I waked up Jasmine said that ndikupita kumunda (I am going to work in the field) then I
said no problem. soon
after she left there was rainfall then Mr Banda came & he told me that ndalakhula ndi anyamata a
kwa [nearest tradingcenter] kuti akuthandize kufunafuna munthuyo koma kuti ndi ganyu munthuyo akapezeka
ulipire ndalama (I have talked with some boys at mbera, so that they should help you to search for that thief ,
but they are saying that it will be casual labour,if they find that thief you will pay them some money) then I
asked Mr Banda that why should I pay them because they are police unit is it
not there duty to help in the village, Mr Banda answered that masiku anoaliyense amafuna ndalama
(nowadays every body needs money) even the polcementhey like bribes in order to help someone quickly,
That’s why they were saying that mugulimoto mulibe mafuta wokwanira (we don’t have enough diesel)while
the government gives them enough

Then I just told Mr Banda anyway I will to see what to do

Then Jasmine came she started saying chaka chino kuli njala kwambiri ndi chifukwa chake anthu
akuba ali ponseponse, Inenso chaka chino ndikulephera kupeza ndalama zokwanira panopa
ndagulitsa nkhuku MK350,munthu wina amafuna kugula amangodutsa( there is a lot of hunger
this year that’s why thieves are everywhere, even myself it is difficult to find enough money, as
of now I have sold a chicken at 350mk, someone who was just passing by bought it)

After few minutes I saw Dorica carrying some tomatoes and Amila came to greet me
withsome salt in her hands Jasmine continued by saying that ndalama zomwe ndagulitsa nkhuku
ndakagula chimanga chakudya ufa wina wachigumu (the money that I got after selling a chicken
I bought maizefor food and maize flour for making maize flour cakes)

Mr Banda continued by saying that if we will not catch Ndaba that means he will not stop stealing
,Rosemary was passing by with her HB & they were discussing that my son in-law is not a thief while the
first days she was complaining that he is a thief that’s why he was chased from Ch. village

Later on I went to fetch some water then I saw Jane making ridges alone and HB of Amila was
also making for cotton alone.

After lunch I started knitting chipewa for the kids of Chikondi (just a gift not selling) After few minutes I started moving around checking what is happening, then I saw chief Mudzi A replanting maize, Auleria was weeding alone in the field, then Jasmine+HB weeding by hands because of more weeds then Innocent was also weeding by hands then I went there to ask her why they are using hands then she explained that *muli zomera zambiri komanso zazikulu kuposa chimanga, ndiye tkatha kulima ndi manja tiyamba kubandira ndi nkhasu, koma ambiri sakonda kubandira chifukwa cha chiswe chimaononga chimanga* (there are a lot of weeds and big more than the size of maize, then after removing the unwanted weeds with our hands, we will start thinning using a hoe, but most of the people don't like thinning because of termites that destroy crops) and I asked Innocent to teach me how to remove unwanted weeds and kubandira (thinning), I learned and managed the same day from there I saw Jane working in the field with her friend then she told me that we are doing ganyu in the field of GVH for MK350 and we will share from there I went to chart with Sofia & I found her eating nsima with masamba (vegetables), Pamela was buying tomatoes with GVH, Elube was taking some vegetables in the field GVH also carried tomatoes

Then at 6:00 I was still there chatting when I heard Jasmine sending Trinity (granddaughter) to go and beg some ufa (maize flour) to Chenawe & she came back with a basin full of ufa from there she also sent her to Nola to take some ufa & she came back with some ufa, full plate then Sofia told me that ine sindingakwanitsa kupempha (I can not manage to beg), From there Jasmine started cooking some nsima + masamba and Sofia also made nsima with masamba, Jasmine said that *timangodya phala masana mangoso kulibe* (we just eat porridge for lunch, no mangoes), then Sofia started complaining that the HB didn’t gave her some money to buy fertilizer, She borrowed MK1000 to GVH but up to now she didn’t gave back the money because she don’t have and she continued by saying that amuna anga sakundipatsa chisamaliro chokwanira koma ana onsewa ndi ake ine ndikulephera kuwasamalira ndekha (my HB is not taking good care of me but all this kids are for him, am failing to take care of them alone)

After eating nsima Innocent said that bambo anga andiwuza kuti ndikagone kwanu kuti usakhale wekha (my father told me that I should spend a night at your house so that you should not stay alone) (then I accepted) Jon the way back home I met with HB of Fatima and he told Innocent that ubwele kunyumba tidzacheze 8:30 pm (come home at 8:30pm so that we should chat) Innocent refused then HB of Fatima continued by saying that kodi ukuganiza kuti Getrude sakudziwa kuti tili pa chibwenzi (do you think that Gertrude doesn’t know that we are in relationship), Innocent didn’t say anything then we continued our journey home

At home we found Kingsley grandson of GVH on the verandah as we were chatting he started explaining that the owner of this house sent a ball and uniform for the boys in Mudzi B and he continued by telling me that don’t worry about those thieves most of them use some medicine, its good that they didn’t kill you most of them used to kill or raping. He also continued by saying that HB of Fatima chased Fatima to go back to her mother no marriage at all (Innocent laughed) from there I was tired then I slept

Midnight Innocent and Kingsley woke up to catch ngumbi, I was tired then I didn’t help them, Then I heard them discussing that
Innocent: ndalama zingati (for how much money)

Kingsley: mk300-mk350

Innoncent: chabwino palibe vuto koma amayi asadziwe ndikabisa mchimanga iwe ukangotenga pamene poadzulo (no problem but my mother should not know, I will hide it in the maize field, then you should go and collect it in the evening)

Kingsley: chabwino (ok)

Early in the morning Innocent & Kingsley went to work on their field. Then I saw Auleria & Thokozani going to their field.

After I went to fetch some water then I met with Levison he greeted me but I didn’t respond because I was still angry [about him maybe being thief, or helping thief]. Then Chisoni came to give me some mangoes and she carried nkhwani (pumpkin leaves) in her hands and she said that chief Mudzi B met with Ndaba (HB of Ainessi) very early in the morning coming from [small crossroads market] but they didn’t greet each other Chisoni was saying by saying that aliyense wa mmudzi muno ndinagona naye (I slept with any woman in this village) (when he was chased in this village) she continued that GVH decided to chase Emra in this village because HB of Ainessi Used to come very midnight everyday & he is a thief, After few minutes Teleza came to greet me and she started saying that sorry for what has happened to you, I didn’t came that day because I was suffering from malaria for 4 days and I was failing even to go to work in the field. I went to [nearest trading center] hospital & they gave me same medicine and I’m ok, continued masiku ano anthu akumarita kumunda mmamawa, masana kubwera kudzadzera kenako kubweleranso kumunda (nowadays people are working in the fields morning hours, they just home for lunch then going back to continue work in the field) then Esnart joined us and she started complaining that on 14 Dec HB of Sakina came selling new clothes for kids at MK100 while the same clothes for MK250 (that means he started stealing some month ago)

Then Kondwani, chief Mudzi B, Esnart begged some vegetables in our garden then I gave them and they were laughing and said that nowadays we are eating more ndiwo (relish) in a plate nsima pangono. Lero there, mawa nkhwani, linalo bonongwe. and ganyu (a little bit nsima, tomorrow we will eat pumpkin leave and the other day bonongwe then go for casual labour is,) is still available said Kondwani

At 12 noon GVH came and she started telling me that sindikufuna kumuwona Innocent akubwera kudzagona kuno olo amayi ake chifukwa aha kubambale, sipuni, Adzibwera mdzukulu wanga yekha ngati simukufuna ndiye mdzukulu wanga achoke mnyumbamo koma wakuba akadzawera musadzandize fuchuka nyumbayi ndi yanga, ndiwawuza kuti asadzabwersono (I don’t want to see Innocent coming to spend a night here again, even her mother, because they can steal your spoons, only my grandson must come, if you don’t want it then my grandson will stop spending a night here, but when the thief comes again don’t tell me because this is my house, I will tell them not to come again) then she left

After few minutes I went to explain to Jasmine what GVH said then Jasmine said that ndayesetsa kukuthandizani koma ndalephera mapeto ake aha kundipha ndi makhwala [the result may be that she kills with medicine]. Innocent sadzagonanso kwanu (I have tried to help you but now I have failed as the end result she will kill me with traditional medicine, Innocent will not spend a night at your house again) and her HB said that this in not good said because we wanted to help you but now we have stopped

After few minutes I went to give Chikondo her gifts (zipewa 4,4 shoes) then on the way the police from Balaka called me asking me if the GVH is helping me to catch the thief then i said that as of now everybody is just busy in the field & most people are waiting to be told by their chief
Mudzi B what to do not me and the police continued by saying that its good to employ 2 security
guard or else you should find another house near the where people are staying because the houses
is big and near manda, maize is growing quickly if you can shout ! no-one else can hear you we are
near Christmas, new year and hunger season most of the thieves used to kill the one who is staying
in the house if they are failing to steal

After that I went direct to Mr Ntawanga to explain what the GVH said and the idea of the police ,
And Mr Ntawanga agreed and he promised to another house on the way back Livia told me to go
with her at the maizemill J. village then on the way Livia said that Levison akupita kuchigayo
ndiye akufuna akabe chimanga cha amayi ake ine ndimpatse MK300 (Levison is going to the maize mill then
he want to steal the maize of her mother and sell to me then i will just give him 300mk) . Then on the way
we met wuth him & he told Livia that ndagulitsa kwina kale wachedwa ( you are late I have already sold it to
someone else) still on the way GVH called me with Livia then we saw a FIDP car bringing
Nandolo (pigeon peas)at Mudzi A 5 bags Mudzi B 6 bags for those who are participating in the tree and adult
school to share for planting. Then the GVH started saying that i told you to tell Innocent not to
stay in the house at night ! have I done the wrong or not ? I answered that its your house we need to follow
your rules, then she stopped talking and we continued our journey. on the way Livia said
that I want to sell fertilizer to Sweetness MK250 2plates. When we reached there we found her
taking out some nkhwani in her field then she discissed with Livia and agreed then Sweetness
complained that a certain thief came and took her coupon that she wanted to share with Malita
but the one who steal is coming from her relatives and she continued by saying that there
are 4-5 thieves in Mudzi B Levison, Lajabu, Ndaba - near her houses -near K. village, Then she
continued by saying that Jane with Alisa [friend of Jane, used to stay with sister in Blantyre who
died recently. Said at borehole that ex-HB wanted to have sex all the time] are just moving around
with men, On 15 Dec Jane was with her boyfriend even Alisa but those men have got their wives
and the wives are also pregnant. Alisa & Jane likes money and today they have gone to Balaka to
other boyfriends and they used to come back at 11-11:30 midnight sakuopa matenda (she is not a fraud of
the disease) said Sweetness and Livia answered that ndinamvanso kuti ali pa chibwenzi ndi Lajabu,anthu
anawapezerela ku dimba
akuchita zachiwererere ndiye akazi awo atamva anayankha kuti asiyeni ndi pa chisuwenipeople
laughed by saying that sakudziwa kuti kuli matenda ! ( I also heard that she is in relationship with XXX, some
people found them having sex at the garden, when his wife heard about it , she said that leave them alone,
they are cousins, people laughed by saying that they don’t know that there is a disease) (Sweetness & Livia
laughed Sweetness complained that one day I was dreaming about HB of Ainessi sleeping with me And am
getting worried because of
the disease.

From there we continued our journey & we reached at J. village (maize mill)and they were selling at
MK80 per kg then chief Mudzi B and Hilda bought the maize. Livia 4 kgs, Hilda 6 kgs chief
3kgs and 12kgs for her mother, on the way back home Livia showed me a certain man who was
in relationship with chief Mudzi B

Then Hilda was complaining that she went for ganyu with her daughter Ada inorder to buy maize for
zigumu ( maize flour cakes) and Ada spent her money by going at Balaka to buy her clothes & for her
daughter while she have got 6 skirts 7 blowers 5 zitenje 3 pairs of shoes. This is the hunger season
we need to spent our money by buying food not clothes after that I saw HB of Chikondi carrying
20kg of ufa (maize flour)and 3 women were coming back to buy cassava for sale I bought for MK40 2
for MK20 then they started explaining that mid January people will not have enough food to eat (the
cassava were very small not ready to be eaten) still on the way I met with HB of Amila coming back
from ganyu (casual labour)at D.
Then the women (Livia, Hilda & chief Mudzi B) started laughing that Hamra wants to kill Rashida & GVH because of the story of Doris chief Mudzi B laughed

At home 6:00 I saw GVH passing by with nkhwani but she didn’t even greet me as usual (with anry face) Then Sofia greeted me and she said that mazulu ndikadya phala ndatopa kudya masamba (I will eat porridge for dinner because am tired eating vegetables) (she laughed)

At 9 pm Kingsley came to sleep and just greeted him then went to sleep

23 Dec 2008

Later on Jasmine and Innocent passed by I greeted them then they said that we are going to receive nandolo (pigeon peas) Then I followed them on the way I asked Jasmine that ndichifukwa chiyani mumalima mammowa kumunda kwina, mazulu kumunda kwina? Bwanji wosalima kaye munda umodzi mumalima kukalimanso kwina? (why is it that you work at the field in the morning, and work in another field in the afternoon instead of working one field at a time,) she smiled and answered that:sindimadziwa chimene ndimachita koma tsopano ndilima kaye munda umodzi.(I didn’t know what I was doing but as of now I will work in one field) Then she continued my HB (Jasmine) said that you should stop coming home & Innocent should stop coming here because later on the GVH will kill my daughter for example early in the morning a certain woman came in order to greet you but GVH was in the field then she answered the woman that kulibe akulima kwa Innocent (while I was washing the body) then I answered them that chabwino sindidzabwelanso (ok, I will not come back again)

They failed to share nandolo that time & because most of them people were still on their fields on the way back Magda came to greet me & she said that last year thieves came twice to steal goats and plate. I was with my HB in the house bu they managed to broke the windos & took what they wanted (sitinawamve chifukwa amagwilitsa ntchito mankhwalo) (we didn’t hear them because they use traditional medicine). Akuba akuno ndi woopsya ndipo ndi chiyambi chabe [this is just the beginning...(thieves here are dangerous and this is just the beginning)] then she left.

I went to buy tomatoes to Phingi & I heard her telling Livia that we will just eat phala lunch because we don’t have enough ufa (maize flour) , Then Sofia was also making phala (porridge) after few minutes chief Mudzi B sent a message to Jasmine to go back and receive nandolo (pigeon peas). I followed her & I found people already gathered with big pots & basins to receive nandolo. Venesi is the one who was distributing nandolo to those people who participated in the tree project. Then the GVH came and said that don’t open this 2 bag one bag will be mine the other for sub T/A [small crossroads market]. Then Mr Mncheka came from Balaka and told all the people to share all the nandolo. then she was ashamed ,After sharing, the GVH took all the empty bags to keep them then other people said that the empty bags be kept to the secretary Chisoni not the one who is not participating(gvh anali ndi manyazi (GVH was ashamed)) Then her grandson Kingsley said that you my grandmother why cant you just go home, people have given you Nandolo although you are not participating,why cant you just accept what
they have given you, all people laughed (she went back home with angry face)

Everybody recived one basin (big)full of Nandolo. Chief Mudzi B gave me nandolo (our basin full) she was told by those people who gathered.Then I saw Hilda making Zigumu (maize flour cakes)..Everybody was happy with nandolo [Some ate them, others planted, but most people had already planted nandolo earlier, so ate. G says it was not an improved variety and they were just handed out, not to be paid back]

At 3:40 I started knitting then I saw women of Mudzi B planting trees near the borehole then Julia & Naima came to greet me they were just complaining that it is now difficult to find food then their will be a lot of thieves after hearing that there is mzunngu in such village. From their they continued there journey to the borehole. I stayed alone up to 9:10 pm then grandson of GVH came to sleep.

I greeted him & he started complaining that his grandfather has got a lot of money but he don’t want to hire ganyu people, he had cows then he sold a lot of money but he is just keeping the money without buying even food he has almost 7-8 field but in the morning he works in one field may be 6-9 ridges only after that he move to othr field 7-8 ridges, wife also does the same (he laugh) I was tired then I went to bed

24 Dec 2008


In the morning he left (5:00) then Mr Banda came to greet me then he told me that the thief has gone to Ch. village, he sent a certain boy related to Rosemary to stay 3 days in Rosemary’s house, while checking if I am still there & what I will be saying about the that thief and indeed he was passing by greeting Livia but not me, he also had greeted Sofia but not me and I also realized that he is looking for something

After few minutes he told me that he was going to buy fertilizer from Innocent at MK700. Then he continued his journey (HB of Fatima also bought for MK1500 from Innocent)

At 8:30 I saw Chisoni & Jane coming back from the field

At 10:10 I went to greet Jasmine. Then I escorted Innocent tofeed the pigs on the way I met with Esnart coming back from the field & GVH was still weeding in her field. Esnart smiled by saying that mwina amuna anga afika lero (maybe my HB will come today) still on the way I saw Julia & her HB eating and Elube + Lovely were coming back from ther field with masauka (sack bag)in their hands. At the kraal we passed by HB of Magda making ridges alone while the wife was cleaning a pot. When we reached to Suset’s house I saw her eating Mangoes, she bought 8 Mangoes for MK20. Then she was explaining to Innocent that ndilibe ufa ndiye ndangokhala sindikudziwa kuti nditani (I don’t have maize flour then I am just staying I dont know what to do) . Innocent answered that pita ukawauze achimwene kwa ( go and tell my brother at J. village ) J. village [father of Suset’s child and brother to Innocent] (they all smiled ) On the way back I saw Teleza & Hamra coming back from the field. Then I met with Chenawe taking thelele (okra)in the field, she begged me MK30 to buy tomatoes & soda then I gave her. At Jasmines house I found
them eating phala instead of nsima (11:30) then Rashida came to buy salt, soap and soap with MK500 in her hands she said that I went for ganyu (casual labour) to Alma for MK600 (kupalira) (weeding) then I saw Sofia eating nsima with nandolo (pigeon peas).

Later on at 2:10 I escorted Livia to the maize mill then she started telling me that ndagulitsa fertilizer MK1000 kwa a Banda koma amayi sanasangalale (I have sold fertilizer at 1000mk to Mr Banda but my mother was not happy I sold half) (half bag) kuti without coupons full bag its MK9000, quarter MK4500 but I have sold at the cheapest price because I wanted to buy some Maize for zigumu (business - but she didn't start) on the way Livia said that ndalandira phone kuchokera kwa BamBo a Hana/ex-HB (I have received a call from father of Hana) he was complaining that I am not going to visit him at [nearest tradingcenter] as usual. Then I told Livia that lets go at [nearest tradingcenter] (my aim was to find out who is selling and what are they going to be discussing with ex-HB).

Still on the way Livia told me that my mother was not happy when I was responding the call from ex-HB. When we arrived at [nearest tradingcenter] we met with the ex-HB of Livia he greeted us then we left after 5 minutes I saw the ex-HB of Livia on the bicycle & he told Livia to follow him from [nearest tradingcenter] they went straight leaving hospital road I just laughed I moved around the market checking who is selling. Then I saw only one man selling new clothes. Thinja still selling tomatoes.

Then inside the market I saw young girls and young boys selling mandasi and zigumu (maize flour cakes). Opposite Maria's shop I saw a certain woman selling but her HB was near by & I just greeted them some men were busy buying goat meat, Then someone else greeted me & he introduced himself to me that he is working at [nearest tradingcenter] hospital TB doctor. He asked me to visit him oneday (a very big stomach man & short) then I just told him that ndikadzakhala ndi nthawi ndidzabwera (I will come when I have time) he continued by saying that undipeze ku office ta (find me at the office of) TB then I saw Livia coming & we continued our journey the maize mill at J. village on the way Livia asked me what that man was saying, Then I told her that mmene ndinali ndi zaka 16 ndinali naye pa chibwenzi amandigulira fanta, soap, mafuta. Ankafuna kundikwatiro koma ndinakana chifukwa BamBo a Hana anayamba kundifunsira, ndiye ndinakonda iwowo (I was in relationship with him when I was 16 yrs old he was buying some Fanta for me, and soap and lotion, he wanted to marry me but I refused because father of Hana had propose me earlier, and I liked him) after that I asked Livia what she was discussing with the ex-HB. The she told me that we went far from the market Because we were afraid of the other wife. And he gave me MK300 for soap and he promised that he will be helping me & the relationship will not end. But my parents are not happy, Because he has another wife (she smiled) wandiwuzanso kuti ndiluke zipewa ziwiri china cha Hana china cha mkazi wina (he also told me to knit 2 hats, one for my daughter and another one for his wife). still on the way I saw Aisha at the maize mill then Livia bought 3kgs for MK240.

Then the Balaka police called me asking what is going on about the thief & I explained that he has runned away to Ch. village. on the way back home Livia said that I will start a Business of Zigumu with the Money that I sold fertilizer.

Then she [Livia] told me that mawa tipitenso kwa [nearest tradingcenter] kuti ndikakumane ndi BamBo a Hana koma uzandimange tsitsi kuti awone kusinthu we should go at [nearest tradingcenter] tomorrow to meet with father of Hana but you will plait my hair before going there so that he could see some changes). Then I just accepted. At home we found
Jasmine preparing some tins for Zigumu (maize flour cakes) & Elube was also busy preparing firewood for zigumu. Then I saw chief Mudzi A on his bike. Then he called me and asked what happened for GVH to chase Innocent out the house and I explained everything to him, Then he told me that *zimenezo sizabwino iwowo amakhala atagona ndi amuna awo iweyo umakhala wekha Janneke kulibe ndiye akumuthamangitsa chiffuwa chiyani?* (that is not good. At night she (GVH) stays with her HB while you stay alone, Janneke is not there. Then why is she chasing her (innocence)?) Let's go & discuss with the parents of Innocent so that she can be back with you in the same house

0769
Jasmine came with HB and Jasmine also explained everything to chief Mudzi A of what happened, Then the parents of Innocent refused to send back her daughter, Then chief Mudzi A said that *ndibwino anthuwa asamuke kwa Mudzi A II with one of the old women there (it will be good if these people (Janneke and Gertrude) will leave here and stay with one of the old women in Mudzi A)*

0770
Then I told them that I should go at the office first and ask any answer that they will give me I will explain to you

0771
Then Jasmine started preparing masamba (vegetables) while Innocent was at the kitchen cooking nsima. Then Sofia was eating phala with her kids from there I saw HB of Fatima calling Innocent & they were discussing that HB of Fatima: *ubwere usiku kunyumba tidzacheze komanso undigulitsa mbewu ya thonje* (come for a chat at home tonight and give me cotton seed so that I should buy at 500mk) for MK500 one full packet. Innocent accepted. From there he also asked Innocent that why are you still talking to your ex-HB don’t you know that I will marry you! I didn’t heard what Innocent answered. It was already 6:55pm then rain started & I went back home

0772

0773
25 Dec 2008

0774
In the morning when I waked up I saw GVH + two granddaughters + HB making ridges. Then I saw Eveles coming to greet me. Then she just told me that don’t listen to what people are saying because some of them are saying that you should go to tree doctor but just come and take one of my cloth. Then I said don’t worry God will give me more than I had she continued by saying that I [Eveles] am still making ridges and still planting rice. After that I went to fetch some water then I saw chief mgwra making ridges with her daughter, then Blessings was preparing maize to go to the maize mill. Then the son of Elube was also going to the maize mill by bicycle full 50kg. Then Jasmine called me to buy zigumu & I found them eating phala & zigumu (maize flour cakes). Then Jasmine said that I will go & sell at M. village because people will be dancing and drinking there

0775
From there my friends in Lilangwe sent some messages for Merry Christmas

0776
At 11:40 I saw a car coming near Elubes house and people said that the HB of Esnart is the one who was coming and it was true then Innocent came & grandson of Jasmine was passing by & Innocent told me that he runned away from Mudzi B to J. village because his grandmother was forcing him to work in the field. He said that *zimenezo ndi nkhanza* [cruelty/mishandeling].

0777
Later on Ellesi passed by with her friend Libana going to Jasmine’s house then Innocent said that these girl begged some money from their boyfriends for Christmas, let me show you the letter that Libana wrote to Davie [who moved to his uncle in J. vlg bcoz in Mudzi B no food]. I read the letter and the address was *ndiwe wekha (you are the only one)* p.o box kukupeza ndi mkazi wina ndi ngozi [if I find you with another, there will be an accident] (we laughed) *ndalemba kalatayi kuti undigatile ndalama wamva!* Chifukwa Ellesi chibwenzi chake chamupatsa MK200 ndipo wagula umbrella (I have written this letter to beg you some money, do you hear! Because Ellesi has received 200 MK from her boyfriend and she bought un umbrella)
Then Innocent said that I am going to cook some nsima lets just go home lather than staying alone here. I followed her then we found the girls still chatting & I just heard Davie saying that sindingakupatse ndalama munthu woti uli ndi amayi ako komanso azibale ako ku S.A ine ndi wamasiye ndalama ndimapeza kuganyu ( I cannot give you the money because you have your parents and some relatives in S.A while I am an orphan and I always find money through piece work) (girls were just quite and departed. Jasmine was busy selling zigumu ( maize flour cakes)& young girls dressed well but very busy buying zigumu my aim was to go at [small crossroads market] but I failed due to rainfall. Then Levison drunk +HB of Fatima then Levison started saying that ndaba zinazake ndiye ndikupita kwa M. village ( I have stolen something and I am going at M. village)(the children kept some money from ganyu said Sofia) then Sofia started complaining that ndibwino ndiyambe geni chifukwa ndikuvutika ndi ana ndiyamba geni iliyonse ndalama ndikabwereka kwa agogo (it will be good if I start doing business, because it is difficult to take care of the children, I will start any kind of business, I will borrow some money to my grandmother) (she didn't mention the type of business)young girls & boys were still busy buying zigumu & Elube was busy applying fertilizer(mixed ) & Innocent said that I will start tomorrow applying fertilizer

Chikondi passed by & Innocent started saying that the HB who is still in marriage with Chikondi was a thief! Last year. Maybe right now he has stopped, he was stealing maize in the field, goats.

At 5:10 Tinenenji came selling mandasi MK10 each, she told me that I have started this business for Christmas & new year only I don’t mean that I will continue(we all laughed )Then Jasmine started eating nsima at 5:30 pm with her grandchildren +HB then Sofia was also going to cook nsima then GVH was coming back from the field.

Hamra + Chikondi were coming back from the borehole then Hamra was telling Chikondi that leronso ndikadya nsima ndi nkhwani (today we will eat nsima and pumpkin leaves again)& zione answered that ife tikadya nsima ndi matemba ( we will eat nsima with dry fish). Abambo anagula malingana ndi Christmas. Hamra said that bola GVH anakagula nyama ya mbuzi komanso azimayi omwe azimuna owo ali ku S.A ndawona akudutsa ndi majumbo andiwo (GVH has bought some goat meat, and I have also seen that those women who have a HB in S.A passed by with food in plastic bags) (they all laughed loudly)

At 8. I went to fetch some water then Sofia greeted me and she started complaining. Dzulo mwana wanga anamenyedwa ndi Konda ( yesterday my child was beaten by Konda) (one of the g.dottas of GVH) ndiye pamene ndinapita kukafunsa agogo amuna anakwiya. Kenako ndinabwerera kunyumba ( when I went to ask about it, my grandfather was angry. Then I just went back home. Then at 8:30pm ndinawona mwana uja akubwera atanyamula zovala zake amati agogo akazi ndi amuna andithamangitsa akuti alibe chakudya chokwanira. Koma alandira ndalama kuchokera ku S.A. ( Then at 8:30pm I saw my child coming with her clothes in her hands , and he explained that my grandfather and grandmother chased me. They said that they don’t have enough food , while they have received some money from S.A)(GVH received money from S.A) [J: Did she not want to share her money?].

In the morning when I waked up, I started washing my cloths then I saw Sofia weeding alone in her field. Then GVH plus HB were making ridges and planting cotton.

From there I continued my journey to the borehole. Then I saw Amila + HB coming back from the field. From the borehole I saw Jasmine + HB weeding in their field. Then the same morning I went to charge my T.phone then I saw Elube applying fertilizer with her son. Then still on the way I saw Livia also applying fertilizer. Then HB of Rosemary was making ridges and planting cotton alone in the field. Then I met with mr Ntawanga kupalira (weeding) alone kenako ndinawona mfumu Mudzi A akupalira wokha ( and I saw chief Mudzi A weeding in his field alone). Still on the way ndinawona Hilda akupalira, mfumu Mudzi B + ana awiri akupaliranso
chimanga. Kenaka Thokozani akupalira yekha chimanga (then I saw Holy weeding, chief Mudzi B and her 2 children weeding in there maize field, then Thokozani was also weeding alone).

Then I stopped at the old woman house (Eveles) ndipo ndinawapeza akudzala chimanga, [Bicycle maker] amapita ku Balaka kukagulitsa njinga ([I found her planting some maize and] [Bicycle maker] was going at Balaka to sell some bicycles). I just greeted them and continued my journey at the grocery I just found Tinenenji selling mandasi and at Dauda’s house I found them weeding in their field.

On the way back I found chief Mudzi B taking nkhwani (pumpkin leaves) from her field, but I found others still in their fields. Then I saw g.son of Jasmine coming back from chigayo almost 10kgs. Esnart was passing by going to the borehole then Thokozani greeted her and Esnart answered that: Lero sindinapite kumunda chifukwa amuna anga abwera dzulo ndiye ndimawasamalira kaye (I didn’t go to work in the field today, because my HB just arrived yesterday then I was taking care of him first) (laughed and shaked hands.) After lunch I started knitting but no-one else joined me. Livia was on the field and Thokozani stopped coming here because of the same thief (In-law)

At 2 ockl I saw Levison passing by but very drunk, then boys near by were saying that: kodi ndalama amazipeza kuti? Panopa kuganyu sitikumuona, komanso nyumba anamaliza kumanga. (where is he getting the money? There is no casual labour nowadays and he also completed the house that he was building (for money).

At 2:30 I saw Sofia planting maize alone in the field then Saibi was coming back from the maize mill with 25kgs.

I stayed alone knitting up to dark hours then at 7:30 I slept.

In the morning when I waked up I saw GVH + HB making ridges then later on I saw chief Mudzi B passing by with a hoe going to the field. At 9 I went to fetch some water then I saw Emra kupalira (weeding) alone in the field. Then at the borehole I found Amila talking to her friend that bola masiku ano tikudya komanso ganyu akupezekwa (at least we are eating nowadays and it’s not difficult to find casual labour), [Eating because of ganyu (esp at K. village, where many houses have iron sheets & HBs in SA)]. At 9:45 I went to take my phone to mr Dauda (charge) then on the way I saw chief Mudzi A kupalira on his field alone and I also met with HB of Chikondi very drunk and mr Ntawanga was laughing by saying that: m’ malo mogula chakudy a ndalama akungomwa mowa, komanso m’ malo mopita kumunda akutanganidwa nali mowa (instead of buying food with that money he is just buying beer, and instead of going to work in the field he is busy drinking).

I passed by the house of the old woman (Eveles) then I saw her making ridges alone. I just greeted her and continued my journey. At the grocery I found 1 girl selling mandasi another girl was selling matemba. I stopped 2 and greeted them and I asked them the owner of the business and they said that it was for their parents.

My aim was to continue the journey to [nearest tradingcenter] and a certain boy stopped me and said that: ndinamva Ndaba akumuza mznake kuti akakupeza akumenya kapena kukupha ndiye usapite wekha. ([I heard Ndaba telling his friend that when he find you he will beat you or kill you, so don’t go alone. Because G is disturbing me, keeping me from moving around, sending police after me.] Just wait for 2-3 days. And I just thanked him and turned back. On the way back I also met with Levison very drunk and people were still in their fields.

At 1:40 I started knitting and Chisoni joined me and she started explaining that: the Hyena that ate the dotta of Ainessi was moving around looking for Ndaba, he went to steal somewhere else at Ch. village, then the owner went of the properties went to the T.doctor and give them the Hyena to
catch that thief. When the Hyena came where Ndaba was staying it just caught his dotta. As of now people are saying that the Hyena’s that moving around now are looking for Ndaba. At 3 Esnart departed and she told me that ndikupita kumunda kukapalira (I am going to weed my crops).

I stayed alone up to 4. then some young boys were passing by and they were discussing that HB of Esnart brought some uniform for boys who play football. Those people who are staying in S.A from this village contributed the money and bought that uniform and now they are discussing to buy some bricks and build a big mosque in Mudzi B.

I continued knitting alone up to 6:20. Then at 7:20 I slept. The saw night at 8:27pm the g.son of GVH knocked the door, then he told me that : ndabwera kudzagona kuno andiuza ndi agogo. Dzulo sindinabwere ndinatanganidwa (my grandmother told me that I should come and spend a night here, yesterday I didn’t come because I was busy ). I didn’t answer anything but I just showed him where to sleep.

28 Dec 2008

In the morning when I waked up I started preparing for my journey to Lilongwe: ICRISAT had called me to go and collect money for food. Then on the way I saw Mrs Ntawanga and her 2 children applying fertilizer in their field. Then Elube and GVH were weeding in their fields. Still on the way I saw Hilda applying fertilizer with 2 children. Then Magda was weeding alone in the field. All the way from [small crossroads market] to Lilongwe everybody was busy weeding in there field.

In Lilongwe I found Desi waiting for me. Then Desi started explaining to me that: ndilibe chakudya chokwanira ndowa K1.650.00. Ndiye ndabwereka K4.000.00 kwa Amayi ndagula chakudya. Ndiye amuna anena kuti tigulitse ma cell phone tigule otsika mtengo ndalama inayo tibweze ngongole ya amayi (I don’t have enough food, as of now a tin of maize is sold at 1650MK, then I have just borrowed 4000 from my mother and bought food, then my HB said that we should sell our expensive phones and buy the cheaper ones so that we should find some money so that we should give back what we borrowed from my mother). I just advised Desi to start a business inorder to be getting some food not just staying and she just accepted but I don’t know if she was happy with that idea.

29 Dec 2008

At 7:10 Icrisat came and picked me up at Guliva (Area 49). Then on the way everybody was busy weeding while others were going to their offices. At the office they gave me my salary for December. Then I explained to Mrs Kachale what happened about the thieves. And she told me that Jannake sent e-mail. She was asking for some-one else to bring some food for you, but we didn’t because all the cars were busy. Then they gave me a cheque of seven thousand and we went together in town. (Bank) After that I went for shoppings.

At 12:01 I was at Area 25 with Desi and she started explaining to me that : 12yrs girl (std 8) is pregnant from her teacher and another 11yrs girl is in relationship with a certain man close to 27yrs. Desi continued by saying that most of the girls are very busy with dressing (it’s like a competition). They are not working but still at school with 2-3 boy friends inorder to get money to buy what they want (nice cloths).

After that I went to greet my aunt and found her charting with her friends and one of her friend started saying that I would like to get married because am just having sexual desires may be because of this ARVS! All the women laughed. The other woman also said the same thing that: ma ARV amabweretsa chilikolako chanthupi (desire) ndimamva a doctor kuchipatala (ARVs cause desire in the body, I heard from the doctor at the hospital). This is not good (said my aunt). After that some friends were coming to greet me.
30 December

In the morning I went for shopping in town then on the way people were busy working on their fields. After some shopping I went back to Desi’s house. Then after few minutes my cousin from Area 18 called me to go there.

At Area 18 my cousin asked me about the thieves and I explained to her then she just encouraged me to work hard in everything and she asked me about my plans then after explaining to her she was not happy because I told her that I want to continue school, she told me that udzikhatitsidwa ndi zomwe uli nazo,(you need to be satisfied with what you have) meaning J.C.E, M.S.C.E, and fuel attendant certificate. I told her that am not satisfied. (I didn’t understand what she meant because she is working and her HB is also working, but both of them are still doing some courses including their children (Accounting)).

After that I went back to Area 25 at 7:10pm my friend at Area 30 called me to go and celebrate a new year there from 31 December. Then I accepted and I told Desi and Desi allowed me to go.

31 December

In the morning I went at Area 30 then I found them waiting for me. They prepared rice, chicken and soft drinks for 1st January. (she is a police woman) After greetings she asked me about the thieves and I explained to her and she asked if the policemen from BK helped me. And she said that the policemen from Balaka didn’t help you properly. Most of them wanted some money. But it’s good because you didn’t give them. Only God will provide everything for you.

At night people were busy cooking, listening to music, celebrating that 2009 it’s another year. I made thobwa for them and they were very happy.

1 January 2009

I was still at Area 30, they told me to teach them how to make mandasi for sell then I helped them (Elida Twabi & Getrude Twabi). At lunch people were passing by with new and nice clothes for sell, then my friend bought 2 cloths for me dress and skirt and they told me to make more decorations and shoes for sell because most of the people used to go in town to buy. Then instead they can be selling for me there at Area 30.

After lunch we were just staying then we went to town by their car just moving around. And they bought some cakes and drinks at crossroads.

2 January 2009

In the morning I started preparing for my journey to Balaka. Then on the way people were busy applying fertilizer. Then I passed by Dedza to greet my mother then I gave her K3,000.00 to buy food and she was happy and she encouraged me to work hard because she is able to buy food and soap because of this job. At 12. I continued my journey to Balaka. Still on the way people were very busy in their fields.

Then at Mudzi B there was rainfall but I found GVH replanting groundnuts

While the HB was weeding then Livia came to greet me and she started telling me that MASAF 2 has started. FIDP told people who are participating to clear the place near the borehole to plant new trees for 12days, K2,400.00 everybody. She continued by saying that 28 people are participating but
most of them are not working in their fields because they used to be tired (only those people who are participating in tree project.) [J: People who participated in the tree projects in Mudzi A and Mudzi B (but also other villages) were now paid to plant the trees, in each village on a separate plot. Other trees were for planting on people’s own field. E.g. Chenawe, Suset and Emra did not attend meetings so were excluded from project. Each chief could select 3-4 strong men/women to do road maintenance for some money, by Levison & Venesi. Mr Ntawanga did both + Ms Ntwanga planted tress = 3 x 2400 MK. Same for Mr Tulipesi. GVH registered about 13 extra names of people pretending that they participated, while not so as to receive (a lot!) of extra money. Mr Ntawanga also registered his daughter while she did not work (so he got 4x2400). From Mudzi B nobody could join bcoz they had not planted trees after receiving nandolo, therefore punished by GVH/chief.]

0857
3 January 2009

SMS: MASAF (tree planting) started

0860
0861
0862

In the morning when I waked up I didn’t see anyone else working in the field. Then later on I went to fetch some water at the borehole then I saw a group of women from Mudzi B working near the borehole. I went near by in order to greet them, but everybody was busy. Then Chisoni told me that it’s MASAF 2, we will receive K2.400.00 for 2 weeks, it’s 200MK per day. Everybody was happy, Chisoni, Auleria, Jasmine, Innocent, Sofia, Blessings and Esnart, Lovely, Amila, Pamela, Phingi, Livia, Grace, Nola, Rosemary, Elube, Ayama, Tumanene, Fissa, Kondwani, Dorica, Tineneni, Hilda, Molly. These women were working, Venesi said that after here we will be going to our fields. But we will not be able to work very hard because we are very tired. (another woman laughed)

0865

From there I went back home and I started weeding in the field. At 8:52 I saw all the women going back to their houses then Sofia came to beg masamba (green leafs) at our garden and chief Mudzi B. At 10:30 I saw Innocent working on her field with Trinity (g.daughter Jasmine). Then HB of Jasmine was working alone in the field. Then at 12:10 the rain started up to 2:40 and at 3. I saw Esnart going to her field alone.

0866

HB of GVH was working alone in the field. Then Innocent came and she started complaining that Fatima is back and she is the one who is keeping the cell phone of her HB and I am failing to communicate with her HB (I laughed) She [Innocent] also continued by saying that I have hired Fatima and my mother ganyu (casual labour)(200MK) ridges. I sold fertilizer and I will pay them.

0869

At 3:40 I continued weeding in my field after that I worked on my garden (weeding). The chief Mudzi A came to greet me & he started telling me that: Charity quarreled with her elder sister then she burned the roof of the house of her elder sister. Then chief Mudzi A continued by saying that: I went to explain to GVH but she refused to go and ask what happened. Then I don’t know what to do. Amfumu a Mudzi A anapitiliza ndi kunena kuti panopa ndikulima ndekha akazi anganso akulima okha ndiye ndikakolola ndikufuna banja langa lithe komanso ndisamuka (I will transfer/move) ndimanga nyumba yanga (chief Mudzi A continued by saying that, as of now I am working alone in the field and my wife is also working alone in her field, soon after harvesting I will end my marriage and I will move to another village) (he showed me the place in Mudzi B) koma nyumba yomwe ili kw a Mudzi A ndizawasiyira (I will leave the house in Mudzi A for her) Panopa sakundilemekeza (people are not respecting me). Panopa sakundilemekeza (people are not respecting me) ndiye khaliwwe limeneli ndatopa nalo (and I am tired with that kind of behavior). It was already dark. Then he continued his journey (wants to move from Mudzi A where people hate him because he came from outside to become a chief while within Mudzi A there were people who could have/wanted to be chief. When he was ill he told g he believes he is being bewitched)
4 January 2009

In the morning I started washing my cloths, then from 8-8:30 I was applying fertilizer in our field. At 9:30 I went to fetch some water then I saw Chisoni, Auleria, Jasmine, Sofia, Innocent, Esnart, Blessings, Evelin, Molly, Pamela, Grace, Tumanene, Ellesi, Lovely, Amila, Phingi, Livia Nola, Venesi, Rosemary, Elube, Ayama, Fissa, Kondwani, Hilda busy working in MASAF project (only women are participating in Mudzi B) then Tumanene started telling her friends that the MASAF project have helped us to have money for food because we already bought fertilizer. Then Grace smiled and said the same words. Hilda answered by saying that I am happy with this MASAF project because I will have enough capital for zigumu (maize flour cakes) (all women laughed loudly). Amila said that my HB is working alone in the field while I am here working at MASAF. But in the late afternoon I will join him.

When I reached home I started making 2 ridges for tomatoes. Then Teleza passed by and greeted me. Then she started saying that I am coming from MASAF project in Mudzi A every woman who is participating in tree project is also participating in MASAF. As of now I am going to finish applying fertilizer in my field but it is not enough may be after receiving some money from MASAF will buy other fertilizer.

Jasmine passed by she was going to wash some blankets and she also told Teleza even in my field the fertilizer is not enough, I will be buying little by little. Then I saw GVH coming back from her field and Livia was busy making ridges in her field. Evelin and chief Mudzi B passed by with masamba. (vegetables)

At 11:10 I went with Innocent at the borehole then Tinenenji and Ada were busy washing cloths, then Amila was passing by and she told me that Ndaba is not coming in this village but Emra will go back to her village after harvesting. Then Hamra also greeted me and she started telling me that: sindinalandire nazo nandolo akuti chifukwa ndinali kogulitsa mchere [people are jealous, saying that I have money eg from selling salt, that I can buy everything myself], koma sindikudandaula chifukwa m’munda mwanga muli masamba ambiri (I didn’t receive the pigeon peas because I am selling salt but am not complaining because I have a lot of vegetables in my field) . On the way back Innocent started complaining that nowadays we’re not eating anything in the morning only lunch but maize grains (ufa wa madeya). After few minutes I saw Ndaba with Levison at the veranda + Rosemary but I don’t know what they were discussing because when they saw they stopped talking.

At 1:30 heavy rain started up to 7:10pm. Then I saw Jasmine passing by with masamba (ndiwo). I was knitting alone up to sleeping hours. Then the rain continued from 7:30pm to 9:50pm.

5 January 2009

In the morning when I waked up I saw HB of GVH making ridges alone in the field. Later on I saw a group of women working at MASAF near the borehole (from Mudzi B). At 7:40am Esnart passed by then a certain young boy started saying that: Esnart started charging telephones, the HB bought some materials when he was coming from South Africa.

At 8:15am Sofia and Jasmine were coming back from MASAF and I helped them to carry a bucket of water then on the way Sofia said that there is a strange animal that is moving around at the graveyard. First day it chased the HB of Elube at 7:30 and yesterday around 7:10 Thokozani was coming back from her mother in-law and she just saw a strange animal with four legs chasing her, it was coming from the graveyard. She screamed but no-one else helped her because there was heavy rainfall. And Jasmine said that it is looking for Ndaba because of what he did when he was staying at Ch. village. Even hyenas are moving around in this village at 6:50-8:00. It will stop when Ndaba will be
caught. [J: Gertrude heard sound of hyena, but sounded more like people imitating hyena to scare people so that they can steal sugarcane. People said that real hyena's start at 10-11pm not 6pm.] Then at Jasmine’s house we found her g.dotta making phala (porridge. And Sofia was also preparing phala.

After few minutes Mphatso dota of Rosemary passed by but very ill and I asked Jasmine what has happened and she told me that Mphatso was pregnant 2 months and she miscarried but instead of going to the hospital her mother came to me to take some Trad.medicine but I refused to give her. I told her to go to the hospital. After that she said that ndikupita kumunda (am going to the field) because of the heavy rainfall on 4th January my maize has been destroyed. Even the field of Lovely near the borehole the maize have been destroyed.

At 9:40 a certain woman passed by and she was explaining to HB of GVH that the heavy rainfall destroyed 3 houses and some people injured, and the lightening also killed one man and 2 women are also injured [not in Mudzi] and they are at the hospital.

Later on I saw Mrs Ntawanga passing by with cassava leaves (ndiwo) and GVH came begging nkhwani (pumkin leaves) at my garden. (People laughed because there is a lot of nkhwani to be found everywhere now.) GVH has a big field of it.) Then Ada passed with mother of Dorica and they were discussing that most of the people are just staying without eating anything in the morning and at lunch masamba (vegetables) without tomatoes and nsima. Molly passed by and she started complaining that at night because the heavy rainfall, some thieves passed by they wanted to take a bucket of water that she left outside inorder to find some water in the morning but the dogs barked loudly and the thief runned away. Then I saw Jane passing by with usipa (small dry fish)

At 10:40 one of the relatives of GVH came and he started telling me that: The owner of this house will call you at 12:30, he said that he have got a secret word that he want to tell you. Then I said that ok I will be waiting for the call, then he left. At 10:55 Chenawe came to greet me and she started saying that: ndasangalala chifukwa ndikupeza bwino, panopa ndikutha kulima bwinobwino koma ndikutandaula chifukwa andiletsa kupanga nawo chitukuko cha m’mudzi akuti ndakalamba (I am happy because am feeling better now, and I am able to work in the field, but I am getting worried because they have told me not to participate in any project work because I am very old)(they forbid me to participate in project because I am getting old). Koma zinthu zikabwera ndi zilandira nawo (but i will be allowed to receive any free things that come in this village). (Told her she will receive handouts, but she did not receive tree planting money.) Koma panopa a MASAF akuti tidzale mitengo tilandira 2400MK, koma a chairman a polofesi akuti ineyo sindilandira nawo koma ndinayamba chitukuko chaka cha 2000. Ndye nditawauza amfumu Mudzi A palibe chomwe andiyankha panopa ndikupita kukawauza a GVH ( but as of now we have been told by MASAF to plant trees and we will receive 2400mk, but the chairman said that I will not receive the trees for planting, but I started participating in this project since 2000, but when I told chief Mudzi A about this issue he didn’t say anything as of now I am going to tell the group village headwoman ). Then she left. (Stopped greeting everybody, very angry.)

At 11:40 I went to make nsinjiro to Phingi then I found her selling tomatoes to Nola then she was telling her that: mwana wanga anakandigulira ku Lizulu ndinamupatsira ndalama (my son bought at Lizulu, I gave him some money)!(Phingi gave money to grandson in Balaka to buy her tomatoes at Lizulu market. At this time she was only one selling tomatoes.) But Livia was busy cleaning a pot for nsima. On the way back I met with Venesi going to buy some tomatoes. At 12:30 the rain started up to 2:10. Then at 2:40 mother of Dorica passed by going to the field to apply fertilizer. Then GVH was also passing with Sofia (at Jasmine) and they were discussing that: Sofia: amuna anga atumiza seven hundred kwacha kuti ndigule chakudya ( my HB sent 700MK so that I should buy food), then GVH answered that bola inu mupeza chakudya koma ine amuna anga angokhola, kumangodwala. (One day Sofia’s HB came and slept at her house. She complains that she will not harvest enough bcoz child was ill, whocoh kept her from working on the field. Will beg from uncles of her kids (sons of GVH) in SA 3000 or 5000MK to buy food]) At 5:40 I went to fetch some water with Esnart, then she started complaining that her maize has been destroyed by heavy rainfall and at the borehole we met with Hilda cleaning her vegetables (nkhwani) (pumpkin leaves) and Blessings was also at the borehole and she was telling me that: ndayamba kuthira fertilizer
koma mvula yanononga chimanga. (Applied fertilizer but the rain washed it away.) On the way back
Esnart told me that: Tayamba ku charger ma phone utha kumabweretsa yako, amuna anga
ndi omwe akumacharger.(we have started charging phones, then you can bring yours, my HB is the
one who is charging the phones)

The son of GVH didn’t call me as he promised.

6 January 2009
In the morning when I waked up I saw the same women working at MASAF near the borehole. Then
later on at 7:10 I saw Esnart and Tumanene going to their fields and they were complaining that: Tatopa
dale komanso tikupita kumunda (we are already tired but we are still going to the field (instead of
resting), then I saw chief Mudzi B working on her field with 2 kids. And HB of GVH was working alone in
the field. Then I saw Sofia working alone in the field (weeding) Then
g.son of Jasmine passed by going to school and Sofia asked him why he is going to school and he
answered that: achita kundikakamiza agogo ndi chifukwa chake ndikupita (I am going because I have been
forced by my grandparents).

At 10:20 Grace and Jane came to knit as we were knitting Grace started saying that: Dorica
aborted in October that’s why she stopped school, she used T.medicines. As of now she has also
started school but she seem not to be serious with education because she is in relationship with
someone else from [nearest tradingcenter]. She also continued by saying that: Thokozani is also participating in
MASAF,
only that her dotta is suffering from malaria.

She also said that GVH was told to choose3-4 people in her village to attend MASAF in
another village while others are preparing the place to plant trees. Then instead of choosing other
people she is the one who is working there, and she also registered in Mudzi B but there is no-one
else who is working on behalf of her but she says she will receive some money from both side which
is 4800MK. She also said that Emra anyamaha nayo ntchito ya MASAF, koma a group
anamuletsa akuti ieye siwam’muodzi muno (she started working with MASAF project but the GVH
stopped her by saying that she is not belonging to this village). (since they are planning to chase
her after harvesting, therefore doesn’t belong to village anymore.)

At 11:10 Esnart came and she told me that: akukufunani amuna anga (my HB is calling you). On the
way I asked her what was wrong and she said that I don’t know. When I reached there, her HB said
that lets go inside our house and discuss something. When I entered there he greeted me and he
introduced himself to me by saying that: ndine Ronan, Esime ndi mkazi wanga, ndimagwira ntchito
ku South Africa, muli pa banja? (I am Ronan, Esnart is my wife, I work in South Africa, are you
married?) Then I said no, he continued by saying that anyone else who is in S.A from this vg knows
about you [son of Elube told everyone. Also son of Venesi went to SA
last month and probably told them] and the owner of the house that you are staying sent a
text last night he said that he is coming soon and he want to get married to you (akukufunani banja)
[J: he has some goats that Gertrude may take]. I asked Ronan that: andikwitira bwanji munthu woti
sakundiziwa inenso sindikumudziwa, komanso ali ndi ana ambiri pomwe ineyo sindinakwatiwepeo
(how can he marry someone that he don’t know, and I also don’t know him, and apart from that he
has a lot of children and I never got married before). Then he answered that he has J.C.E no wife and
only 2 kids, here is his photo, akuti usunge udziyiwona ndi mwamuna wabwino komanso sakonda
akazi atha kukutenga ku S.A. (He said you should keep it, he is a nice guy and he don’t like women [is
not a womanizer], and he can take you to SA)[I refused to take the photo]. After that mrs Ntawanga
was coming and he stopped talking and departed. The Esnart followed me on the way, she told me
that: ukhaile masuka (you stay free) kuvomera kapena kukana (to accept or deny), koma khalidwe
lake ndiloipa amakonda akazi (but he has a bad behavior, he loves different women), then we
stopped talking because many people were passing by.

At home I found Grace & Jane (came to have hair braided) still waiting for me, then I asked Jane
if she will start school or not, then she answered that: Amayi anga andiletsa akuti ndikatenganso
mimba ina (my mother said that I should not go because I will get another pregnancy). Then I
asked her that: sungathe kukhala opanda chibwenzi ndikumaliza school? (can’t you manage to stay
without a boyfriend till you finish your education?) She just laughed loudly.
Later on we saw some boys coming back from school, then Grace asked them that: *ndi chifukwa chani mweavora nthawi zino? (why are you coming this time)* Then they answered that: *Mr Chikombo amenyedwa, kunawera mwana wina kudzayamba sukulu, ndiye Mr Chikombo anamubwewa [booz too young].* Mwana uja atawauza makolo ake, anakwina ndikupita komweko, atafika kusukulu. Makolo uja anawauza Mr Chikombo kuti mweavora kutwera ana kusukulu lero ndikumenyani *(The school’s headmaster has been beaten. A certain girl came to register at our school, then the headmaster sent her back. The child went to explain to her parents and the parents were very angry and went to meet the teacher. Then when they reached there they told him that you are used to send children back from school. Today I am going to fight with you)*, then they started fighting up to Mr Chikombo injured and sent back all the children from standard 1-8. (we all laughed)

Jane continued by saying that; tomorrow am going to Balaka to take some money from my boyfriend [J: he told her to get her braided, gave money for extensions: 3 strings a 100 MK], then Grace asked her *chibwenzi chiti? [I know only the one in SA, who is this]? Koma Jane mwamuna amene uja soli pa banja? ? (which boyfriend? But Jane, is that guy not married??)* Jane answered that: *ngakhale ali pa banja sivuto (although he is married but I don’t care) . Alisa alinso pa chibwenzi ndi mwamuna woti ali pa banja (Alisa is in relationship with a man who is married) akuti mkazi wake amusiya (he will leave her) chifukwa ndi wamwano (because she is rude) akwatira Alisa (then he will marry Alisa).*  [J: Later: Boyfriend from SA is back now.]

Said that even though his parents are against their relationship, he cannot leave Jane bc Ox she was the one who helped him find money for his transport to SA by selling zitumbuwa and some of her maize. G and Sofia surprised about how fast and unexpectedly Jane got married to another one now, maybe pregnant they speculate. Had 2 boyfriends in Balaka, now married to one of them. From the way her HB looked when he came to pick her, people think this was the boyfriend who was not married. Sofia and Lovely said Jane already started to have boyfriends at the age of 12, and speculated that maybe she is tired of this now and therefore got married quickly.]

Grace continued by saying that: I will not apply fertilizer in my field. I received a coupon inorder to share with my g.mother (Nola) but when I went to Mzuzu she already bought the fertilizer. Then on 5 January I gave her the money that she used to buy my fertilizer, then she answered that: *ndathira kale kmwungwa. (I have already applied in my field).* Grace added that: *panopa ndikuganiza kuti ndisiyu kulima chifukwa fertilizer ndilibe, ndikazapeta ndalama ndidzagula chimanga. Mwina akuchita zimenezi chifukwa ndine wamasiye. (As of now I think I should stop working in the field because I don’t have fertilizer, I will just buy some maize when I get money, maybe they are doing this because I am an orphan).* Jane answered by saying that: *ndibwina kumachita zibwenzi ndi anthu apa banja kuti azindigayira ndalama (it is good to be in relationship with someone who is married so that he can give me some money, and not marry myself) woesati kukwawita ayi. Ngati ndingatenge mamba ndidzachotsa (If I will get pregnant I will abort). (If I got pregnant I will abort).* [J: better to be pachibwenzi then you get more money, like a campaign, winning a woman. Koma pabanja not anymore. Desi said same to G]

At 12:10 I escorted them then on the way I saw chief Mudzi B eating nsima with nandolo (pigeon peas). Tumanene was cleaning some masamba (vegetables). Innocdent passed by with nkhwani.

At 2:10 I saw Livia making ridges alone & she told me that *ndagula mtedza dzulo K150 ku Balaka ndikufuna ndidzale (I have bought ground nuts yesterday at Balaka for 150MK I want to plant).* I asked her where she finds the money, but she didn’t mentioned.

At 3:05 a certain woman came to greet and she started saying that: *ndimakhala kwa [nearest primary school], pepani ndinamva kuti akuba anabwera kudzakuberani, koma musanda daule ndizingopemphera [I stay at nearest primary school village, am sorry I just heard that thieves came to steal your things, but don’t worry just pray your things].* After that, I saw Sofia going to apply fertilizer, but the rain started. The woman continued by saying that: *ndikupita kwa Bima kukuwongola (borrow) chimanga 50kg bag ndidzawapatsa ndikazakolola, dzulo sindinadye kalikonse, lero ndadya masamba okha, mango anatha! (I am going to Esnart to borrow a bag of 50kg of maize. I will give back soon after harvesting. I didn’t eat anything yesterday, today I just ate vegetables. mangos got finished)*

The HB of Amila greeted me and he started saying that: *ndikuchokera ku ganyu kutali, dzulo ana anga sanadze nsima koma chimanga chikusowa (I am coming back from piece work, but it is very far, yesterday my children didn’t eat nsima, it is difficult to find maize),* then he continued his journey.

At 4:10 I went to chat with Livia and I found her writing a letter, then the address was like: *mwayelomba kalata ndauppeza, P.o. Box mpaka imfa (I found a chance to write a letter, P.O.box Till death).* I asked her where the letter belong to, then she said that to the ex-HB. The letter says that: *Amuna anga ndifa ndi njala, takhala masiku 4 kumangodya nandolo (my HB, I die with hunger here, we have stayed 4 days without eating any food, just eating pigeon peas)(not true happened 1 day only ("while father has money," says G)] komanso
The child was sick, then I want some money but I have soap.

Mother wonders what Livia does with the money, gives her soap sometimes but no soap.

And she gave the letter to a certain boy to give him. [J: February: he hasn’t helped her though, is not taking care of her. G thinks Livia still likes him: “spending money to call him... Without any benefit. At least if he was buying some soap for her or the child, at least, but no...”]

After that a certain woman came & she was saying that: masiku ano ganyu kulibe, anthu alibe ndalama, chakudya chikusowa. Kenako anthu ayamba kumaba Phando [planting station for seed]

zoti munda waukulu koma ndalama pang’ono (as of now you can’t find piece work, people don’t have money, and it is also difficult to find money, then people will start stealing, we work in a big field but getting little money).

Livia complained that ndinapereka 200mk kwa Levison ganyu (ridges) koma mpaka pano sakulima (I gave 200mk to Levison for casual labour, to make ridges but he is not working on it) [Feb: Still hasn’t done the work... He had begged her so that he could buy food. Livia thought he was serious, he even started doing some ridges. He eventually gave her back the money after receiving from MASAF].

7 January 2007

In the morning after breakfast, I saw the same women working in MASAF project near the borehole. Then I started my journey to [nearest trading center] for some interviews with business women. Then Livia was also going to the hospital, her child was suffering from malaria and eyes, then on the way I saw HB of Jasmine making ridges alone. Then Mr Ntawanga was also weeding alone. Then I saw Florence and her HB weeding. Chikondi & Alida were also weeding. Still on the way I saw HB of Thokozani applying fertilizer alone. Then Innocent asked him where he got fertilizer, then he answered that: osandifunsa ndine wamkulul ndikudziwa ndekha (he said: don’t ask me, I am a grown up person I know myself where I got it). Then I found Eveles weeding alone and she said that: ndayamba kugulitsa chinangwa (I have started selling some cassava). After few minutes I continued my journey to [nearest trading center], but at the grocery I didn’t find anyone selling. Still on the way Innocent started saying that Pamela divorced with the new HB because Ronan is back (HB of Esnart) She is saying that ndibwino kupitiliza chibwenzi ndi Ronan chifukwa amandithandiza [J: Gertrude doesn’t know whether Pamela’s HB took care of her, but did work in the field together - “which is what most women here like...”]. Koma Esnart sakudziwa [its good to continue the relationship with Ronan, because he gives me some help. But Esnart [his wife] doesn’t know about it]. Innocent continued by saying that: Ronan alinso ndi mkazi wina ndi mwana ku Ntchisi boma. (Ronan has another wife and a child in Nt. town)

She [Innocent] also continued by saying that: bambo anga & Levison are participating in MASAF project. When we reached at [nearest trading center], Innocent continued her journey to the hospital while I stopped at the market. At the [nearest trading center] market a lot of young girls were selling mandasi, cold water for their parents & some of them were selling cassava.

Ine ndine mzimayi, geniyi ndiyomwe ndingakwatitse (I can manage this type of business because I am a woman [J: men can manage other type of businesses, like Sofia saying that she cannot manage to buy sugarcane at far distance, says G].

5. Selling at [nearest trading center], Monday-Sunday, mamawa kwambiri ndimapita kunyumba. Kuyambira 8 o’clock ku geni.(I go to work in the field early in the morning, from 8 ocllock I go to do business)

6. Tomato 7000mk, beans 10.000mk. onions 500mk. I buy at Balaka (maize) sometimes Lizulu. Maize profit- sindikudziwa chifukwa ndinamulali chakudya (I don’t know because I used it to buy food) - kulumitsa ganyu, soap, lotion [employed people for casual labour, bought soap and lotion] . I decide how to use this money if I don’t know because I am the one who stays at the market, and I know what to buy when I am going home)

4. children, 1st marriage: nthawi yomwe ndinayamba geni, mwamunaya anali wa hire (bike taxi) ndiye anandifunsira kumsika konkuno banja. Kenako anamwalira. 2nd marriage, anandifunsira
Kumsika konkuno ankti akundifuna banja (HB hardware) kenako ine ndinavomera. Good HB chifukwa timalina limodzi komanso geni amapita kukandigulira (he bought merchandise for her BS), ana owme anowapeza amawosamalira, komanso alibe akazi ena (by the time that I started business my HB was a bike taxi, and he proposed marriage, then he died. 2nd marriage, he proposed me here at the market, he proposed marriage (he sold ‘hard ware’[gadgets like combs and sunglasses], then I accepted, he is a good HB because we work together in the field, he also goes to buy things for my business, he also takes care of his stepchildren, but also because he doesn’t have another wife).

8. Ana 4 + HB + wife - mother with her grand dotta, ndimakhala ndi amayi anga chifukwa alibe mwamuna (.I stay with my mother because she is not married) Other . Other income - growing maize, cotton for sale. Already hired ganyu. (casual labour)
9. Form 1 (no fees)
10. Ndima peza zosowa zanga monga sopo, ndiwo mafuta, mchere (I find my needs like soap, relish and lotion).
11. Palibe kupa kopangira geni (there is no disadvantage of doing business)
12. Ena amasowa mpamba, ena sakonda kuhala pa msika, amachita manyazi.
13. Finca, concern, mpamba wangi ndi womwanira nidiye sindingatenge ngongole. (Some due to lack of capital, others they don’t like to be at the market, they are shy. FINCA, Concern. I have enough capital, so I will not take loan,)

After that I saw HB of Sweetness selling mangoes.

1. Market woman Malinda (she was knitting) 1977 – A. village
2. Chimanga - nsomba (maize, fish)
3. Chimanga ndayamba panopa koma nsomba 6yrs ago (for maize this is my first time, but for fish I started 6 yrs ago ). I decided to start a business chifukwa cha mavuto, bambo anga anandipatsa ndalama yoyambira (because of problems, my father is the one who gave me the money to start business).
5. Everyday at [nearest trading center].
6. Chimanga ndayamba panopa, ndalama ya nsomba (for maize this is my first time, I bought it with money from fish BS), fish buying 7000mk, profit - 1500mk, ndinagula sopo, mafuta (I bought soap and lotion), I decide myself.
7. 3 children HB died, mwina ndidzakwatiwanso mwamuna wina akazapezeka kutsogolo (maybe I will get married in the future when I will find another HB)
8. 4 in the family with my children (3)
9. Std 8, I was pregnant to the same HB.
10. Ndima peza thandizo la zinthu zing’onozing’ono monga sopo, chakudya, sugar, mchere (I am able to buy small things ,like soap ,food, sugar, salt,)
11. Disadvantage: ngati anthu sakugula ndiyoipa (it is bad if people are not buying).
12. Ambiri amachita manyazi amati amuna awo ndi omwe adzibweretsa ndalama. (Many women feel it is shameful to be selling at the market, saying that it should be the HB who brings in the money)
She gave example that women are ashamed to be selling thobwa, showing that she has little money. But cloths are expensive hence more prestigious business.
13. Finca - concern malingana ndi momwe gain imayendera, sindingakwanitse. (According to how business is going now, she would not manage {to take loan/pay back loan}.

After that I continued moving around but no-one else selling vegetables, only the woman selling beans, groundnuts, nandolo. 3 men fish - wife of the ex-HB of Livia was also selling fish for her HB. 1 woman was also selling usipa (small dry fish).

2. Usipa (small dry fish)- kumanga tsitsi [braid hair] I was selling rice and beans but I stopped because it is expensive. Ndinayamba 2004, koma ndimasiyayisa, I decided to start business chifukwa ntchito ikusowa, kumabwera anthu kumafuna antchito (I started in 2004, but I always stop. I decided to start business because it is difficult to find job, people come to look for those people who want job, doing survey) . Survey from Ulongwe, ndiye ndimapita, ndikatha ndimapitiriza geni. Amuna anga ndi mphunzitsi (then I always go and after the job I continue doing my business. My HB is a teacher).

Usipa wa ( small dry fish for )20 thousand ndimagulitsa (I sell) 35 thousand, ndalamayo ndimamangitsira nyumba, komanso azimayi ena timapanga kitchen top up (with the money I build the house, and with some women, we contribute money per month. Zinazo ndimagula chakudya, I decide how to use the money.}
Amuna anga ankadutsa kwathu, timakhala m’mbali mwa msewu ndiye anandifunsira banja koma tinakhala pachibwenzi for a year, ndinkafuna ndiwone ngati samamwa mowa komanso ngati angandisamale. Ndiye panthawi ya chibwenziyo ankagula sopo, ndiwo ndikukhala ndi makolo, kenako tinakwatirana. Good HB chifukwa timalima pamodzi(My HB was passing by where I was staying, we were staying near the road, then he proposed for marriage, we stayed in relationship for a year, I wanted to see if he don’t drink beer and if he can take care of me, when we were in relationship he was bringing soap, relish, and at that time I was staying with my parents, then we got married, he is a good HB because we work in the field together.),

2 children wife +HB now he is at teachers training college, we grow maize, g/nuts, now cotton for sale, already hired ganyu.(casual labour)

Form 4 ndimapanga za survey mu June, ntchito zikusowa (completed secondary school and I do some survey in June).

Panopa ndili ndi nyumba amuna anga amalandira ndalama zochepa,sitikanakwanitsa kumanga nyumba.(as of now I have my own house, my HB receives a little money, before we could not manage to build a house,)

Ena alibe mpamba, ena amuna awo ndi a nsanje (jealous) amaganiza kuti akukapanga zibwenzi. Finca- concern- kuvuta kubweza (to pay back) ndimawona anthu ena muniska nthawi yobweza nrongole mu msika amathawa(Some don’t have capital, other HBs are jealous, they think that they are going to have boyfriends. FINCA, Concern, but difficult to pay back).

The woman whom we interviewed last time was not selling. She greeted me and said that mpamba ndilibe ndiye ndinasiya ndidzayamba ndikadzapeza ndalama zina (I don’t have capital then I stopped, I will start when I find another money)(laughed). 1girl was selling cassava but she said it was for her parents.

On the way back home a certain woman was selling in a restaurant, I asked if I can talk to her, then she accepted but Livia was chatting with her ex-HB.

No disadvantages.

Market women Timani

Restaurant: Tea ndi nsima, they either bring mandasi, bread.

Investment- anandipatsa amuna anga (my HB is the one who told me to start this business because of some problem, my HB is the one who gave me capital,)

Ndiyomwe ndimakwanitsa chifukwa anthu amagula tsiku lililonse (this is what I manage because people buy every day).

Monday - Sunday.

200mk profit chifukwa tonse timadya konkuno, kulimitsira kumunda, kugula chakudya,sopo (200 MK profit because we all eat here, hiring casual labour, buying food and soap. My HB decides.

Ana 4 since 1999, tinakumana kunyumba kwathu, iwowa amafuna mkazi wa banja, ndiye ndinavomera. Panthawi yomwe ndinawomera, ankandipatsa zosowa zanga mungo sopoto, lotion, ndalama. Ndiyomwe chifukwa timathandizana kulima komanso kugula chakudya (I have 4 children since 1999, we met at my house, he was looking for a woman to marry, and I accepted, by the time I accepted he was providing my needs like soap, lotion, money, he is a nice man because we work together in the field, and he also buy some food).

4 children - wife + HB.

Std 4 mavuto kuchuluka [increasing problems].

Panopa ndikusangalala chifukwa ndikupeza zosowa zanga tsiku ndi tsiku. Concern - Finca - CUMO kuvuta kubweza. (I have 4 children since 1999, we met at my house, he was looking for a woman to marry, and I accepted, by the time I accepted he was providing my needs like soap, lotion, money, he is a nice man because we work together in the field, and he also buy some food).

MITENGO Tea (price list)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Price</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Wamkaka (with milk)</td>
<td>30 mk</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wopanda (without milk)</td>
<td>15 mk</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pisi ya buledi (a piece of bread)</td>
<td>40 mk</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Banzi (small bread)</td>
<td>20 mk</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nsima (nsima)</td>
<td>80 mk</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ya nyama (with meat)</td>
<td>100 mk</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

After that it was already 12:20 then I bought nsima ya mgaiwa + meat for lunch. Ex-HB of Livia bought nsima and they were eating together. On the way back Livia said that I will not stop being in relationship with my ex-HB although he is married to another wife. Koma ndili ndi chibwenzi
ku Balaka amaphika kwa a mwenye. Sindikufuna banja koma tidzingopanga chibwenzi bola azindipatsa sopo (but I have a boyfriend at Balaka, he cooks for an Indian family. I don't want marriage but just to be in relationship, as long as he gives me some soap). (so that at least he gives me soap) [J: Gertrude thinks she was positive about the situation at this time because the boy bought her nsima].

At the grocery I found Phingi selling tomato. Then Saibi selling cassava but all the women that we interviewed were not there. Then Phingi gave Livia 400mk to buy maize at J. village (5kgs) then, on the way Livia complained that after sending the grandson to buy maize instead of 5kgs he used to buy 4 or 3kgs, he used the other money to give his girl friend but the ex-HB didn't give her money, he just promised that ndibwera kwamu komweko. (I will come to your home)

After that Livia went direct to her field to plant g/nuts. At 4:35 Jasmine called me, she sent her g.dotta and she said that: Agogo akuti mpupite mudzikacheza (my grandmother said you should go and chat), then I went there. I found Sofia cooking nsima with nandolo (pigeon peas) and Innocent was busy cleaning nkhwani for ndiwo (pumpkin leaves for relish). Sofia said that: ana anga akungolira ndi njala pomwe bamboo awo akudya kuyambila mamawa, masana, madzulo. (my children are just crying because of hunger, while there father are eating from morning, afternoon and dinner,) . Jasmine told me that: ndikuchokera ku ganyu kwa Kima ndinatenga mbewu ya chimanga ndi mtedza ndiye ndimakapalira chimanga chawo (am coming back from casual labour at Kima I went to take maize for planting and groundnuts for planting. Then I was helping weeding in her maize field). Then Ada was buying soda for therere. At 5:30 I went back home and started knitting.

8 January 2009

In the morning I continued applying fertilizer in the field then I saw some women still working at MASAF. Later on I saw Mrs Ntawanga and Chisoni going to apply fertilizer in their fields. Then I saw chief Mudzi B going to apply fertilizer then Esnart said that: ine ndatsala pang'ono kumaliza kuthila fertilizer (I am about to finish applying fertilizer). [J: G sent me text message on Dec 24 that maize was at knee height = right time for apply fertilizer.]

Then Innocent came & she told me that: Tadya phala mam'mawa ndiye tikukamaliza ganyu kwa a Magda tinatenga mbewu ndi amayi. (and we are now going to finish ganyu at Magda because we received seeds from them).

At 10:12 Venesi & Chikondi came to greet me and they started saying that: masiku ano ntchito yachuluka mam'mawa ku MASAF, masana kwathu mazwalo kuganyu nthawi yocha osapezeka (we have a lot of work nowadays, we are working at MASAF in the morning then in the afternoon we work in our field, in the late afternoon we go for casual labour, we don't have time to chart,) . Then Venesi said that HB of GVH is very ill but he is not hiring some people to help him in the field, but he has a lot of money, he sold cow + his son in S.A sent some money. After that GVH also came to greet me and she started saying that: ndikupita kukagula tomato( I am going to buy tomatoes), amuna anga akudwala anthu akungowalodza (bewitched him) chifukwa tinayamba kule kalele kupita kuchipatala koma sakuchira. (My HB is sick people are just bewitching him, because we started going to the hospital long time ago but he is not getting better). [J: but G has never seen him going to the hospital. GVH one time came by with traditional medicine. Panopa ndikumapita ku MASAF kumunda ayi. Ana onse pakhomo asiya kupita kumunda, akungodya nsima (as of now I am just working at MASAF but not in my field, all the children at home has stopped going to the field, they are just eating nsima.), then she left.

Esnart came at 12:20 & she said that the owner of the house called chief Mudzi B to tell you that: likhale banja musamalipire [you shouldn't pay] nyumba komanso musabwerere ku Lilongwe, ndiye a mumfu amachita manyazi kubwera kuti adzakuuzeni. Komanso uncle ake akuti asangalala chifukwa ndiwe ophunzira (educated). Ana onse pakhomo asiya kupita kumunda, akungodya nsima (as of now I am just working at MASAF but not in my field, all the children at home has stopped going to the field, they are just eating nsima.), then she left.

At 3:30 I started my journey at [small crossroads market], then on the way I met with Chikondi and she started saying that: mam’mawa tikulima kumunda kwathu, masana ku MASAF (we are working at our field in the morning then in the afternoon we work at MASAF). Then still on the way I met with Livia
going to the kraal and she started telling me that: pa 28 January ndipita ku Balaka kuli birthday ya chibwenzi changa . ( on 28 January I will go at Balaka its my boyfriends birthday). (she smiled). I continued my journey at [small crossroads market]. Then I saw 3 women selling second hand cloths, the same women whom we interviewed selling tomatoes but the other woman started selling mandasi. And the other girl who said that the HB is at Kasungu started selling mandasi. I greeted all of them, later on I went to talk to the women selling second hand cloths, the other one said that it was for the HB while the other one said that she used to sell at Balaka & it was her time to sell at [small crossroads market]. Then 1 young girl was selling mangoes but for her mother. The other young girl was selling g/nuts. All the shops were opened. After that I started my journey back home.

Then Kima said that ndikudwala malungo ( I am suffering from malaria) and Suset said the same thing. At home I started knitting but I was feeling pain in the joints like malaria then I just slept.

In the morning when I waked up I saw Innocent making ridges then g.son and dotta of GVH were making ridges. Later on I saw GVH telling Amila + 4 young girls + 1 woman ganyu (weeding) in cotton field. Then Amila told me that panopa ndikulimanso ganyu kwa ( I am also doing casual labour at) [small crossroads market] 1700mk. GVH continued by telling Amila that: Amuna anga agulitsa ng’ombe, mukatha kulima akupatsani ndalama.   (my HB has sold a cow ,when you finish working in this field he will give you some money).

At 8:00 I went to make some nsinjiro ( ground nuts flour) at Phingi’s house & I found them eating phala ( porridge) while Emra was making zigumu( maize flour cakes). Then Phingi asked where Emra found the money but she just answered that: masiku ano osamafunsana ( nowadays don’t bother to ask where I get money) [people commented that they didn't see her do ganyu, so where did she find the money to buy ngaiwa? About Ndaba same, don’t see him do ganyu...]. After that I went back home. I just sleeping up to lunch because I was not getting better (malaria). At 12 noon I saw Amila and 1 woman with young boys still doing ganyu. Then Amila came complaining to me that: a group anabwera akuti sindikupalira bwino ndiye ndisiye. koma ndikudandaula chifukwa ndayamba kulima mam’mawa mpaka pano. Komanso ndakwiya ndiwauza kuti asandipatse ndalama mbali (part) yomwe ndalimayo. After this words Amila said that: ndikupita kunyumba kukaphika nsima.(GVH came complaining that I am not weeding properly, then she stopped me,  but I am getting worried, because I have started working in the morning till now, iam angry then Iwill tell her not to pay me where I have worked , after this words Amila said that iam going home to cook some nsima)

Later on I heard Rosemary asking for ganyu to GVH then she answered that mutha kupitiliza komwe Amila anasiyila ( you can continue because Amila has stopped). After that I heard GVH querelling with 1 of the ganyu workers. Simunahine bwino, musadzabwerenso kudzalima ( you didn’t work properly,don’t come a gain tomorrow). Then the woman answered that inali ngozi kudula thonje pepani. ( sorry, it was an accident to cut the cotton)

At 4pm I started getting better then I went to see Jasmine then I saw her HB working alone in the field & she told me that ine ndalephera kulima nawo chifukwa cha njala, mam’mawa ndadya phala, masana palibe.(I have failed to work because of hunger, I just ate porridge in the morning but no lunch, )
Then chief Mudzi B came and she started complaining that her 2 kids are sick (malaria). She continued by saying that: ndikalandila ndalama ya MASAF ndiyamba geni ya zigumu (when I receive my money from MASAF I will start a business of maize flour cakes). (she did not).

Koma anthu ambiri akwa Mudzi B akuti ayamba geni ya chinangwa. Jeneti wayamba kugulitsa tomatoe (but a lot of people from Mudzi B said that they will start a business of selling cassava. Jeneti has started a business of selling tomatoes). Jasmine answered by saying that: ine ndisiya geni ya zigumu kuti ndiyambe ya nsomba kapena chinchangwa. Lachiwiri, 13 January tialindira ndalama ya CUMO, lachitatu 14 January ndalama ya MASAF. Koma Innocent atagulitsa fertilizer, anagula chimanga 300 basi, inayo (the other money) sindikudziwa kuti anagulira chani, chifukwa kumunda wallimitsa 220mk. Komanso dzulo anapita kwa [small crossroads market] pobwera wagula skirt! Tsiku lililonse akumagula ma biscuit. Tikalandira za MASAF tisonkherana (we will each contribute) 1000—1000 kuti tigule chakudya (I will stop selling maize flour cakes, then I will start selling fish or cassava, on 13 January we will receive money from CUMO, on wensday 14 January we will receive from MASAF. But when Innocent sold fertilizer she just bought some maize for 300mk only, I don't know what she used with the other money, because at the field she just hired for 220mk only, and yesterday she went at [small crossroads market] and when coming back she bought a skirt, she is buying biscuits every day, when we receive money for MASAF we will contribute 1000—1000 so that we can buy food, will stop selling maize flour cakes.). Chief Mudzi B answered that: ndibwino akakolola ayambe kuphika chakudya chake chifukwa mukadzamwalira adzalephera kusamala ana ake (it's good if Innocent will start cooking her own food otherwise when you die she will not be able to take care of her children).

Then chief Mudzi B said that ndikupita kutenga mankhwala kwa Mrs Ntawanga (I'm going to get medicine from Mrs Ntawanga).

10 January 2009

In the morning when I waked up, I saw Innocent + her mother, Lovely and Chisoni coming back from MASAF. Then Jasmine laughed by saying that: Ainessi is at the hospital, then her mother (Rosemary) went to tell Emra to go together at the hospital, instead of telling her friends to go with her. At 9:35 I went to fetch some water, then I saw Thokozani working in the field of GVH where Rosemary was working. Then still on the way I met with chief Mudzi B coming back to her field with thelere and at the borehole I met with Ada cleaning some nkhwani then, Chisoni said that: ndatopa ndi MASAF chifukwa ndikulephera kulima kumunda kwanga (I am tired working at MASAF because it is making me to fail to work in my field). On the way back home I met with HB of Sweetness coming back from the field. At 10:38, I saw HB of Thokozani coming back from the field. At 12:50. Venesi came to greet me and she said that: dzulo ndinadya phala masana, koma lero ndalephera, ndalayo nsima. Sindingakwanitse kutha kulima masana kudya phala. (I ate porridge yesterday for lunch, but today I failed and I ate nsima, I cannot manage to work in the field in the afternoon then eat porridge).

At 1:20 I saw grand son of Mudzi B coming back from the maize mill, while Sofia was going to the maize mill, then I saw chief Mudzi B applying fertilizer alone.

At 1:55 I went to fetch some water, then I saw Amila with HB applying fertilizer, then the g.son of Jasmine was going to the maize mill. At 2:30 I started knitting, then Livia came and she told me that: ndikufuna ndibe (steal) nkhu ku kunyumba ndiyi ndiweretse mundigula, ndalayamo ndikufuna ngidzule zina zake (I want to steal a chicken at home then I will bring it so that you can buy I want to use that money to buy something). Then I told her that: ine sindifuna nkhu ku (I don't want a chicken). Then she [Livia] continued by saying that: [Ex-HB] ndiwanuimbira phone dzulo, ndiye tinakumana kwa [nearest trading center], mkazi wake anali kuchipatala. Ndiye wandipa K150 ya sopo (I gave a call to my ex-HB yesterday then we met at [nearest trading center], his wife was at the hospital, then he gave me 150MK for soap.) (G: probably he gave money to buy soap for Hana, but I don't think she bought soap. She likes buying mandasi for Joy. J: Joy is fat indeed! G: T says she sometimes eats 5 zigumu, crying for more. Eats with mother and then goes to grandmother to eat.). After that she continued her journey to the borehole.
Then a certain woman also came to see what I was knitting and she started saying that: bola amene ali ndi amuna awo ku S.A, koma ife tikugona ndi njala, kumangolima ganyu (it is better for those who have HBs in S.A, but we are just sleeping without eating food, just doing casual labour). After that around 4:25 Phingi came to greet me and she started saying that: ndakongola ndalama kwa mnzanga mawa ndiphika zigumu. Koma ndikudandanula chifukwa Livia atha kutenganso mimba, week yonseyi akumapita kwa [nearest trading center], akabwera akungogula ma biscuit, osagula sopo kapena kundipatsa ndalama pang'ono kuti ndiwonjezere kugula chakudya (I have borrowed some money from my friend, then tomorrow I will make some maize flour cakes, but I am getting worried that may be Livia will get another pregnant, the whole of this week she is just going at [nearest trading center], when coming back she just buy biscuits, not even buying soap or giving me alittle money so that I can add to what I have and buy food). After this words she left. And she also said that: masana tadya nandolo yekha koma ana adya phala (for lunch we just ate pigeon peas but the children has eaten porridge).

In the morning when I waked up, I started cleaning the house, then I saw GVH + 3 g.sons weeding in g/nuts field. Then I saw Sofia carried masamba (vegetables). And I saw Livia making ridges alone. Then one of the g.son of Mudzi B told her friend who was passing by that: ndikulima ganyu m'munda mwa agogo.(I am doing casual labour in the field of my grand parents).

At 9:30, the son of GVH (the owner of our house) called me, I asked where he found my number, but he didn't answer anything GVH once asked for it, saying a friend wanted to call her]. He just started saying that: my uncle will come there and you need to go (right now) with him to your parents and arrange about marriage. [J: Gertrude thinks he even already told his parents, indeed GVH suddenly stopped being angry, even brought therere, coming to greet everyday, hoping it will help, stimulate G to get married to her son]. I will come in July, am happy that you're my wife now. And my parents are happy. [May be HB of Esnart cheated him saying that: I accepted, trying to please this man. Since this time he hasn’t called again]. I didn’t answer anything but I just switched off the phone (but did say she doesn’t want, then just listened to all his words, tired of going against).

At 10:10 a certain woman who was selling cassava at [small crossroads market] came to greet me, with HB of Esnart. Then HB of Esnart started saying that: sindikulima kemumanda, panopa kuli a ganyu, ine sindingakwanitse. Ndadwerera ku Malawi kuno kudzapuma, osati kupita kemunkanda(I am not working in the field, I have just hired some people to work on it, I will not manage working myself) I came here in Malawi to rest, not going to work in the field). In S.A we start working from 8 morning up to 5-6pm. Sometimes including weekends (a woman laughed and complained to him that: mukamuwuze mwana wanga kuti anditumizire ndalama. (Tell my son to send some money for me).

Then he continued the same story of the owner of the house, but I answered that: sindikufuna, sindingasintho maganizo (I don’t want I cant change my mind). Then Amila passed by, she said that: ndikukagula soda (I am going to buy soda). Then g.son of GVH was also passing by, then he was telling his friend that: Emra wayamba geni ya chinangwa, dzulo zigumu (Emra has started a business of selling cassava but yesterday she was selling maize flour cakes).

Later on Livia came and she started saying that: Lero sindinapite kumunda, ndikudwala maso pamodzi ndi mwana wanga. Amayinso sanapitenso kemunkanda akudwala maso, komanso akuphika zigumu(I didnt go to the field today, iam having some pain in my eyes even my child has the same problem, even my mother didn't go to the field because of the problem of her eyes, and she is also making some maize flour cakes).
At 3:10 I started knitting and Venesi + Jasmine joined me then started saying that: Saibi + Alida anapita ku ganyu ku D. village, m'malo mwa ndalama analandira chinangwa. (instead of money they receive cassava). Panopa kuli njala yambiri chifukwa ena ndi aulesi, kuganyu samapita, geni samapanga amangokhala (Alida went for casual labour at D, village. But instead of being paid money she was paid cassava. This year we have a lot of hunger because a lot of people are lazy, they don’t do any business, ) . Then Venesi left, Jasmine continued by saying that: son of Hamra, HB of Filimona, went to a certain friend after Saibi’s house, he took some poison and added in water to feed the chickens. He wanted to kill the chickens because of jealousy but lucky enough the owner of the chickens saw him, they started querelling but I don’t know how the story ended.

After few minutes we saw Venesi passing by with a certain man, then Livia started laughing by saying that: Amuna akumudzi ndi choncho. Amenewo ndi chibwenzi cha Venesi akufuna adye nawo chimanga cha m’munda [which Venesi cultivated alone]. Kenako banja kapena chibwenzi chithe. Venesi wakwatiratina amuna 5, ana onse omwe ali nawo ali ndi bamboo ake osati m’modzi (that’s how boys from the village behave, that one is the boyfriend of Venesi, they just want to eat the maize that has been planted, then they will end the relationship when they finish the harvest. Venesi got married for 5 times, all the children that she has are of different fathers). I asked why they divorced then, Livia answered that: amati akakwatira ndi mwamuna akabeleka mwana amayamba chibwenzi ndi mwamuna wina, mwamuna uja akamva amathetsa banja. Kenako Venesi amakwariri ana ndi mwamuna yemwe amapanga naye chibwenzi,( when she gets married and give birth to a child , she starts relationships with another man, when the HB hear about it, he ends the relationship, then Venesi goes to marry the one that she is in relationship with) [J: Diffcult to understand why, says G. Maybe revenge for cheating HB. Maybe bcoz pachibwenzi is financially better dan pabanja...]

Later on Livia left, she told me that: ndikupita kukafuna ndiwo kumunda ( I am going to fetch some relish in my field). Then I saw Venesi going back home alone.

12 January 2009
In the morning when I waked up, I started cleaning the house. Then after that, I saw Fatima going to fetch some water, and then she greeted me and said that: ndabwera, akayambiranso khalidwe lokonda akazi, ndidzipita kwathu sindikabweranso (I have come back, but if he starts moving around with other women again , I will go to my village then will not come back). I asked if she decided herself to come back and she answered that: anachita kubwera kudzakambirana ndi makolo anga. Ndiye makolowo ndi amene anandiuza kuti ndibwere ( he came and discussed with my parents, then my parents are the ones who told me to come). Then she continued her journey. At 7:30 the rain started, but I saw Phingi the same morning going to sell zigumu (maize flour cakes) and tomatoes at [small crossroads market]. After that a certain woman came selling chambo (fresh) and I bought 2 (very big 100) I asked her if it was her business but she answered that: ayi amuna anga amakaba nsomba ku Dam ([large commercial estate]) ndiye inenso ndawabera amuna anga kuti ndalamayo ndigule zigumu kwa Phingi ndili ndi njala (my HB goes to the Dam at [large commercial estate] to steal this fish, then I have stolen from him so that I should sell and buy some maize flour cakes, at Phingi, I am hungry)(she laughed). The rain continued up to11:50. Then at 12:15, Amila came to beg salt for porridge at lunch. Then I gave her and she started complaining that: amuna anga ayamba kukana kupita kumunda, komanso amati ndidziwapatsa nsima pawokha osati pamozi ndi ana. Akuti ndidziwapatsa nsima yambiri, osati pang’ono, koma kuganyu sakupita nawa (my HB has started refusing to go to the field, and he always want to eat on his own plate not eating together with his children, and he said I should be giving him a lot of nsima , not allitne, but he is not helping me doing casual labour) . After that I saw Sofia carried fish and Innocent carried masamba (vegetables) while chief Mudzi B was going to buy tomatoes.
At 1:20 I saw Blessings, Lovely and Livia at Fatima’s house, then I heard them discussing that: ndibwino tisiye chitukuko cha mitengo, chifukwa a mfumu sakulankhula bwino. Dzulo momwe timadzala mitengo tinalakwitsa, ndiye m’malol moti atiuze momwe tingadzialire, anati nonsenu ndinu zitsiru, anakuzuzi ndani kuti timadzala chonchi? (it is good to stop doing the tree planting project, because the chief is not talking good, when we were plantig trees yesterday we made some mistakes, instead of telling us how to plant properly she said that you are all stupid, who told you that we plant like this) (The chief was rude when she felt trees were not planted correctly, instead of explaining how it should be done she called people stupid etc. This was after MASAF, just planting for community benefit. Did not take up work for 3 days, until GVH called all chiefs to tell chief Mudzi B that she has to address her people in polite way. Ah no, they would not have stopped if this was for money. After being called by other chiefs, she apologized and people started to work again). After few minutes they stopped talking because chief Mudzi B was passing by.

At 3:18 I went to charge my phone then, I saw HB of Jasmine weeding alone while Innocent was just staying, still on the way I saw Florence weeding in cotton field and the HB of Filimona was also weeding alone. At the grocery, I just found Jeneti selling tomatoes and cassava. On the way back I met with Phingi coming back from [small crossroads market] and going straight to the grocery with zigumu (maize flour cakes) and tomatoes, I went straight to greet Eveles and I found her weeding and she started telling me that: chaka chino kuli njala, dzulo kunabwera anthu kuchokera kutali kudzalima ganyu mizere. Ndiye ndinawalipira chinangwa, komanso ndikusangalala chifukwa chikukula mwamsanga, kusiyana ndi chaka chatha (there is a lot of hunger this year, yesterday people came from far away to do some casual labour making ridges, and I paid them some cassava, and iam happy because it is growing big than last year).

She continued by saying that: the day you slept at F. village looking for a thief, I came at your house very early in the morning but I found g.son of GVH slept on the same mat with Innocent [which may explain why GVH chased Innocent, said Eveles]. I was not happy because in past we were afraid of boys not staying together at the same mat. After that she [Eveles] gave me some mangoes. Still on the way I met with chief Mudzi B and chief Mudzi A chatting. And chief Mudzi A took some potato leaves (roots) giving chief Mudzi B to plant at her field and I was going back home with chief Mudzi B, still on the way we met with all the women from Mudzi A working for MASAF and they were saying that: lero ndi lomaliza, lachitatu tilandira ndalama (this is the last day, but on wednesday we will receive the money). Then chief Mudzi B started telling me that: lero ana anga anapita kuchigayo ndiye pobwera anangula chinangwa ndi sugar, ndiye masana tadya chinangwa ndi tiyi, madzulo tidya nsima. (my children went to the maize mill today and when coming back they bought some cassava, and sugar, then we ate the cassava at lunch with some tea, and for dinner we will eat nsima) After that I saw Sofia making ridges, she said that: ndikulima mizere ya mbatata (I am making some ridges for sweet potatoes), the GVH was also passing by going to the field. Then I saw Dorica and her brother coming back from the field. Later on I saw Mrs Ntawanga coming back from the field. And Thokozani was in the field taking masamba for ndiwo (vegetables for relish).

At 4:30 I went to fetch some firewood with Amila, and on the way she started complaining that: Emra has hired some ganyu workers in her cotton field but I don’t know where she is getting the money. And now Ainessi has got a baby girl and the HB is sleeping in the house of Emra and GVH + chief Mudzi A said that it’s good to chase Emra right now not waiting for her to harvest because she is keeping a thief in her house. May be he is preparing to steal maize in our fields. I met with Grace and she started saying that: ndikudwala malungo pamodzi ndi mwana yemwe (I am suffering from malaria together with my child).

13 January 2009

SMS: Maize already started some small cobs.

When I waked up in the morning I saw Livia, HB of GVH working on their fields (ridges). Then I saw Thokozani going to the field alone. After that I went to fetch some water, then on the way I saw chief Mudzi B weeding in cotton field and she was complaining that: the rain destroyed her 7...
ridges for potatoes. Then at the borehole, I found Kingsley, g.son of GVH complaining that:
Jane disappeared on 7 January. She just told her g.mother that am going to see my mother at J vg.
And she came back at 4pm. After few minutes she also told her g.mother that: ndikupita kukacheza
kwa K. village (I am going to chart at Kh. village). From that day up to now she is not coming back.
He continued by saying that: mwina wapiti kwa mwamuna wina wake anamunamiza (may be she
went to meet with a certain man). (Because she disappeared secretly, people didn’t belief it could
be a serious relationship. Until the man came with her to fetch her cloths here, after a week. Then
they knew it was serious: says G). Koma choncho sibwino, ndibwino kunena chilungamo [the
thru]nt ngati akufuna kukwatiwa. Alisa (mznake) anali ku Blantyre ndi mkulu wake (elder sister)
amangoyendayenda ndi amuna, kenako mkulu wake munjira anaphedwa. Kuno anabwera maliro,
kenako Alisa pang’ono pang’ono wayamba kusiya kuyendayenda ndi amuna (but that is not good, it
is good to say the truth: if she want to get married, Alisa (her friend) was in Blantyre with her elder
sister, and she was just moving around with men, then on the way: her elder sister got killed, we
just received the dead body. Little by little Alisa has now stopped moving around with men) . Some
of the women were just laughing at the borehole. The other woman answered that:
kumangoyendayenda phindu lake ndi chiani? Doris pano wachitsa mimba akudziwa kuti
sangakwanitse kusunga mwana (what’s the benefit of just moving around, as of now Doris has
aborted, she knows that she cannot manage to take care of the child,) . Later on I saw Tumanene
coming back from the field.
At 2:10 I started knitting then g.dotta’s of Eveles came to beg salt and beans to plant, then I gave them. After that Venesi and Innocent joined me knitting then Venesi said that: chief Mudzi B instead of accepting that she didn’t speak properly, she is still saying that: amene sakufuna chitukuko asiye Those who don’t want to work on projects should stop. Then some people were angry and told GVH for the second time to help them. Then as we were knitting, I saw chief Nduwa and chief Kam’baule with GVH then Venesi said that: akukambirana za nkhanu yomwe ija kuti wayitane (to call) a mfumu Mudzi B asepeze (apologize) kwa anthu amene anawauza kuti ndi zitsiru (foolish) (they are discussing about the same issue, they want to call chief Mudzi B to apologize to those people that she called foolish). After that chief Mudzi A and Tulipesi passed by, then Venesi said that: akukambirana za Emra kuti achoke m’mudzi muno asanakolole chifukwa Ndaba akumabwera usiku. Komanso anthu ena anakumana naye manda a F. village (they are discussing about Emra, they want to chase her out of this village before harvesting her crops because Ndaba is still coming in the night, and apart from that other people saw him at F. village graveyard) akukambumo mankhwala (he was digging some traditional medicine) osaopa kupita kumanda yekha (without being afraid going to graveyard alone). Venesi added by saying that: akukambirananso za nthchito ya MASAF kuti mawa tikalandire ndalama zathu. (they are also discussing about the MASAF work that we were doing so that tomorrow we should go and receive our money). Innocent answered that: ife za CUMO mpaka lero akungotinamiza sitikulandira, then Venesi laughed by saying that: ine ndiyasa kutenga ngongole chifukwa geni yoti rdingapango sindikwiwoona (I stopped taking loan because I don’t see the business that i can do). Komanso anthu alibe ndalama sangale. (and a part from that people don’t have money to buy). After that Innocent begged masamba (vegetables) from our field for ndiwo (relish), then I gave her. Venesi also said that pa 25 January ndimaliza chikamba chomwe ndinakolola, panopela ndikapanga mgaia. Koma mwana wanga mwana wake akungodwalawala, mawa apita naye kuchipatala. Innocent said that: ndagula thonje kwa mr Ntawanga, 100 mbale yaying’ono (on 25 January I will finish the maize that I harvested last season, then I will just make some whole grain maize flour, but my grandson is just getting ill often, its good to go to the hospital tomorrow, then Innocent said that I bought cotton seed from mr Ntawanga). [Only those in cotton club get seeds and mankhwala in advance, paying at harvest time. In vlub: HB = grandson of GVH, HB of Jasmine...]. Then Venesi answered that: nthawi ino ndiyodzala mbatata, thonje Eveles ndi pa 10-15 January, panopela nthawi yathwa (this is the time to plant potatoes, cotton planting should end Jan 10-15, that time has ended now). Then after Innocent and Venesi, Jasmine came and she started saying that: usiku ndimasunga zigumu mnyumba panopa tinakula, ndalama yake kugula nyama, zovala, nsomba, timayiwala kuti January nsima timadya pang’ono, penaphala (so that we can eat enough nsima, not just doing the business of maize flour cakes or tomatoes, we have a lot of hunger this year and only few people have got food, the only problem is that we sell a lot of food soon after harvesting, and we just use the money buying meat, clothes fish, we always forget that in January we eat alittle of nsima sometimes porridge). After that she left.
In the morning when I woke up, I went to fetch some water with Sofia, then on the way, she started telling me that: ndayamba geni ya mango, dengu limodzi akuti ndizipeza ndalama yogulira sopo ndi ufa. Ndiye ndikugulitsa limodzi 5mk-10mk, komanso atumiza mtedza kuti ndidzimuphikira mwana phala (I have started a business of selling mangoes, I have started with one basket, so that I can be able to find money for soap and maize flour am selling at 5mk each and 10mk each and he has sent some g.nuts for the baby’s porridge). At 7:52, the rain started, then I saw Elube with pumpkin leaves in her hands for ndiwo. She was coming back from the field. At 8:10, I saw Fatima grinding maize and Esnart passed by, the Fatima told Esnart that: ndikufuna ufa woyera, panopa sindinayambe kugula chimanga, ndikudya chomwe ndinakolola (I want white maize flour, as of now I have not yet started buying some maize am eating what I harvested last season). The rain was still and I saw Chisoni coming back from the field with nkhwani. Later on I saw Venesi coming back from the field with nkhwani. GVH was also coming back from the field. Then Sofia passed by, she told me that: ndikupita kwa [nearest primary school] kugulitsa mango. (I am going to [nearest primary school] to sell some mangoes).

At 10:10 I started knitting and the rain continued up to 12:40. At 2:10 I went to see Innocent and I found her still on the field, then I just started chatting with Sofia, then Kondwani joined us. Then Sofia started saying that: I asked Alisa (friend of Jane) if she knows properly where Jane is staying. Then she answered that: indeed I was with Jane going to Balaka to our boyfriends, then Jane cheated me that: ndikubwera ndikupeza pa [am coming I will find at] Mz. village and it was already 5:45pm. I waited for her up to 6:10pm, then she didn’t come back and I continued my journey home. Alisa continued by saying that: zimenezi sizabwino, chifukwa chibwenzi chake cha kwa J. village, amandifunsa ine kuti: Jane alikutu? Komanso chibwenzi chake cha ku S.A anabwera ndiye anapita kwa a gulupu kuti Jane alikutu? Komanso chibwenzi chake cha ku Mz. village (koma ali pa banja) amafunsa funso lomwelo. Then Kondwani answered that: watengana ndi wina waku Balaka, ali ndi grocery, mwina wakwatira kapena ali ndi mimba (this is not good, because her boy friend from J. village asked me that: where is Jane? And her boyfriend from SA came then he went to ask the GVH that where is Jane? Then another boyfriend from Mz. village (he is married) asked the same question then Kondwani answered that she has gone out with someone from Balaka, he has a shop, may be she is married or she is pregnant). Sofia answered that: mwamuna wake wake wa ku S.A amadandaula kuti anagona naye popanda chishango ndiye ndibwino amukwati osati kuchotsa mimba. (her boyfriend from SA was complaining that they had unprotected sex then it is good to marry her than to abort). Koma olo akhole ndi mimba, adzatchula ndani? (but if she get pregnant who is she going to mention?). (asked Kondwani) no-one answered [J: G thinks Jane may have opted for the boyfriend that was not married and was not going back to SA (leaving her alone).
Then I saw Trinity g.dotta of Jasmine carried ufa (maize flour). Then Jasmine said that: I gave her only 80mk for 1kg (Kondwani laughed) Sofia answered that: ndibwino kumagula chinangwa chifukwa cha 80mk ndichambiri (its good to buy some cassava because with 80mk you can buy a lot) . Then Kondwani bought some tomatoes for 20mk and left.

At 3:15 I went to borrow some decorations to a certain girl who sells mandasi near grocery, I wanted to learn. Then on the way I saw Phingi and Livia making ridges, then Rashida was weeding, mrs Ntawanga and Chikondi were making ridges for potatoes. And HB of Florence was weeding alone in the field, when I reached at Eveles’s house, I saw some ufa and maize 5 litre bucket. Then [Bicycle maker] started telling me that: ndayamba kugulitsa ufa small plastic bag 5mk, kuti ana adzipeza sopo (I have started selling maize flour am selling a small plastic bag at 50mk so that I should be able to find some soap for my children). From there I continued my journey, when I found that girl she told me to go on Sunday because Monday-Friday she goes to school. On the way back, i saw Florence taking some nkhwani from her field. Hamra also was taking some nkhwani (pumkin leaves) from her field. Then I saw Chikondi making phala (porridge) and she was telling Filimona that: ndikuphika phala la ana anga. Anayamba kudya ali ndi (am preparing some porridge for my children they started eating when they were) 3weeks old. Then mrs Ntawanga laughed by saying that: kuchipatala ananena kuti mwana ayambe kudya phala ali 6 months osati 1 month (at the hospital we were told that any child start eating porridge after 6 months not 1 month), Filimona and Chikondi laughed. Then I saw Sofia taking masamba (vegetables) from her field.

1092
1093
15 January 2009

In the morning when I waked up, I saw GVH + HB + g.dotta weeding in g/nuts field. Later on I saw Chisoni + Lovely coming back from their field. After breakfast, I went to make some nsinjiro at Jasmine’s house. Then I found Sofia eating phala (porridge) with her children, then she was telling Innocent that: amuna anga anditumizira paraffin (my husband sent paraffin), and Innocent answered that: bola inu muli ndi amuna anu (I envy you because you have a husband). Innocent was also busy cooking porridge. At 9:10, I saw 2 daughters of Elube coming back from the borehole with a lot of plates in the basin. Then I saw Thokozani + HB coming back from the field. At 9:55 Tumanene passed by with some tomatoes and masamba (vegetables). At 10:05, I started knitting, then HB of Amila started complaining that tikulima ganyu kwa [small crossroads market], koma tinamaliza ndalama sakutipatsa, kuyambira dzulo tikungokhala opanda chakudya. Ana akungolira ndi njala. (we were doing casual labour at [small crossroads market], we finished working but we have not been paid. Since yesterday we are just staying without food and children are just crying.)
Then Amila was passing by coming back from the field (ganyu) (casual labour). She was telling Rosemary that: dzulo ndadya chinangwa madzulo ndilibe ufa (yesterday I just ate cassava for dinner because I don’t have some maize flour). After lunch, I saw Mrs Ntwawanga coming back from the field. At 1:45, I continued knitting, I failed to go at [small crossroads market] because there was rainfall. At 2:42, I saw GVH hiring some women ganyu in cotton field. Kondwani, Thokozani, Rosemary, Hilda, Mphatso dotta of Rosemary were included.

Then Livia joined me knitting, then I asked Livia why Levison is just staying at home while Thokozani is doing ganyu. Then Livia answered that: Levison was telling my mother that: he bought some ufa for 800mk, but after 2 days Thokozani told her HB that there is no ufa (maize flour). But Thokozani gave some ufa to her mother without telling the HB, then he is angry that’s why he is not helping her doing ganyu.

Then Kondwani came just to greet me. And Livia started telling Pamela that: do you remember that your child was born on 1 March - mine 6 March –Sofia’s 8 March, Pamela & Livia laughed by saying that tonse tinali ndi mimba nthawi yogulitsa thonje (we all got pregnant during cotton selling season). After few minutes I saw Fatima + dotta carried cassava for food. Then Livia said that: kwathu kulibe ufa, ndikupita ndikaphike chinangwa, wagula cha 100mk (we don’t have maize flour am going to cook some cassava she bought at 100mk). After few minutes, 2 boys passed by, and the other one greeted Pamela and Pamela told me that: that boy is the owner of this child. After 3 minutes the boys came back and the [very young] owner of the child called Pamela by saying that: iwe Pamela tiye kwanu ndikufuna ndikuuze nkhani ina yake (Pamela lets go to your house I want to tell you a certain story). Then Pamela followed them. Then I saw mother of Dorica coming back from the field.

At 4:45 Esnart came to greet me, then I she started telling me that: kunyumba kuli anthu ambiri, amuna anga anagula video set, ndiye anthu akowonera mafilimu osiyanasiyana (there are a lot of people at home my husband bought a video set and people are watching different films). (free of charge, especially men & boys went to watch) she smiled. Panopa ndikuchokera kumunda, koma amuna anga sanapite nawo. (I am just coming back from the field but my husband did not go with me).

I asked why, but she smiled and said kaya. (I don’t know). (then rain continued up to 5:20pm.

16 January 2009

In the morning when I waked up, I saw Mphatso, dotta of Rosemary, Hilda, Rosemary, Thokozani still doing ganyu in the cotton field of GVH. Then I saw Livia making ridges, later on at 8:18, I saw chief Mudzi B, Venesi and mother of Dorica, they told me that: tikupita kwa [small crossroads market] kukatenga mankhwala athonje (we are going to [small crossroads market] to collect pesticides for cotton). (apply every 2 weeks). At 9:05, I went to fetch some water, then I found Amila and Innocent at borehole. Then Amila started saying that: usiku sindinadye chilichonse, lero mam’mawa sindinadye, masana sindikudziwa kuti ndidya chani (I had nothing to eat for dinner, today I have had no breakfast I don’t know what I will eat during lunch time). Then Innocent answered that: ife dzulo tadya chinangwa madzulo, lero masana tidyanso chinangwa (we ate cassava for dinner, we will also eat cassava for lunch). Amila continued by saying that Elube went at Admarc yesterday to buy maize for zigumu (maize flour cakes) K1.200.00. Emra has gone today to buy maize.

At 10:05, I went to buy soda for thelere, then I found Sofia eating phala (porridge) with her children and she was telling Lovely that: nsima ndidya 2:00 (I will eat nsima at 2:00). Then Livia + her mother + HB, g.dottas were eating cassava (cooked) and nsombs. At 12:02, Fatima passed by with 15kgs of ufa (maize flour). Later on Jasmine came to borrow my bicycle, she told me that: ndikufuna ndipite kwa [nearest tradingcenter] kukufuna muntuu amene akufuna mbuzi (I want to go at [nearest tradingcenter] to find out if there is someone who wants to buy a goat), from 3000mk - 2.500mk, ndikufuna ndugule chimanga (I want to buy some maize). Then Dorica passed by.
and she answered that: amayi anganso agulitsa dzulo nkhunda (pigeon) 2 for K250, tagula chimanga (even my mother sold 2 pigeons for 250mk and we used the money to buy maize) .

At 1:10, I prepared my journey to [nearest trading center], but I failed to go because of heavy rain. Then rain continued up to dark hours. At 6pm, I went to make nsinjiro (g.nut flour, then I saw Innocent cooking nsima, then Sofia told Trinity that: mawa ukandigulire chimanga 2kgs (tomorrow you should buy 2kgs of maize for me) . At the same time, I saw HB of Fatima on a bicycle but he carried his dotta, then I asked where he was going, then he answered that: ndikukapereka mwanayu kwa amayi ake (am going to give this child to her mother) (Fatima left to home village) paja banja linatha, ndiye ndimalola kuti mwanayu adzibwera kudzatenga ndalama ya sopo.[if there was no child I could have stopped everything, but because there is a child I still give some money]. (although we got divorced I allow the children to come and collect money for soap)

Jasmine started telling me that: amuna anga analimitsa ganyu for 220mk kupalira, koma ine ndinawauza kuti ndibwino asiye grocery, ndalamayo tiwonjezere kugula chakudya chifukwa phindu lake sindikuliwona, nthawi yambiri chakudya ndikugula ndi ndalama ya geni yanga. Grocery adzapitiliza tikadzagulitsa thonje, koma akukana (my husband went for casual labour(weeding) and got 220mk but I told him that it is good to close the shop so that the money should be used for buying more food because I cant see any benefit most of the time I use money from my business to buy food for this season so that the shop should be re opened after selling cotton but he is refusing.) . (Innocent says, her father just keeps the money from his grocery, just saving, already has 5000mk).

At 06:54pm, GVH came asking if there is some leakages (there was heavy rainfall) then I told her that: yes, but only 3 places and she told me that: Kingsley will be sleeping here till Jannake came back, because last night a hyena passed by your house. Then at 8:40, I saw Kingsley coming to sleep.

17 January 2009

In the morning, when I waked up, I saw Rosemary and her daughter Mphatso doing ganyui in the field of GVH, then I saw HB of GVH making ridges alone. After that, I started cooking porridge for breakfast, then Innocent came to greet me, and she told me that: lero ndinapita ku ganyu m'munda mwa AChikombo, 30t phando, ndalandira K96. Ndikufuna ndikagule sopo (I went for casual labour in the field of Mr Chikombo 30t per planting station and I got 96mk I want to use the money to buy soap) . Then Sofia passed by and she told me that: lero sindipita kumunda, ndikufuna ndichape zovala za ana (I will not go to the field today because I want to wash clothes for my children) . Then I saw HB of Jasmine applying fertilizer. At 8:30, HB of Fatima came home and he told me that: ndikugulutsa nkuku (am selling a chicken at 300mk, then I told him that: pepani ndalama ndilibe.(am sorry I don’t have money)

At 9:00, I saw Amila passing by with bananas in her hands, but very small. Jasmine passed by going to the borehole and she was telling a certain woman that: my g.son, Davie has gone to J. village, he said that there is no nsima here but at J. village, morning tea, madzulo nsima.(nsima for supper)
At 10:57, I saw Rashida coming back from the maize mill, she carried 20kgs of ufa (maize flour) and she also bought chipewa (hut) for her g.son. At 11, I saw Levison passing by with 3 chambo. Then HB of GVH asked me why I am not helping him working in the field, then I answered that: pepani sindingakwanitse (sorry I will not manage). At 12:30, I saw g.dotta of Jasmine passing by with 4kgs ufa. Son of Ntawanga also passed by with 6kgs of ufa.

At 1:50, I started knitting, then I saw Chisoni going to the field. Later on at 3:30, gGVH came to greet me and she started saying that: I have hired aganyu (casual workers) in the cotton field of my HB 800mk, after selling a cow, but my HB was angry, he said that: 200mk is a lot of money, don't hire ganyu, I will be weeding myself. Then GVH continued by saying that: I have already stolen that 800mk from his pocket and I have them. He is really sick, he start working in the field at 5am up to 12:30, but 4-5 ridges only. He has a lot of money but failing to give me and buy sugar or fish but nkhwani (pumpkin leaves) everyday, that's why he is just very weak anytime.

Later on, I saw Rebecca near our house chatting with Mphatsi dotta of Rosemary. They were asking one on other that: Mphatso: banja lako likuyenda (is your marriage ok)? Rebecca: eya kaya iweyo (yes, what about you)? Mphatso: pang’ono, paja mimba yanga inachoka, bola iwe si 4 months pano? (not really, because I miscarried atleast you are 4 months pregnant now) Rebecca: zimachitika.(it happens)

Then Innocent joined me knitting, after few minutes, HB of Blessings greeted me in English, then Innocent laughed by saying that: HB of Blessings was my friend, but as of now, he is looking nice and he is able to speak English because of being educated. He has got a lot of money. Am getting worried because my mother told me not to get married to the son of Fissa. And my mother yesterday said that: pepa mwana wanga, sindimadziwa zomwe ndimachita, pokuuza kuti usakwatirane ndi mnyamata uja. Panopa ukanalandira ndalama, zovala (sorry my child I did not know what I was doing when I told you not to marry that boy as of now you could have received money and clothes) from your HB in S.A like your friends.

Innocent continued by saying that: mawa amayi apita ku Balaka Admarc kukagula chimanga. Inenso ndipita kuchipatala ndi mwana, akudwala. (tomorrow my mother is going to Balaka ADMARC to buy maize am also going to the hospital with my child who is sick) She left at 6:10pm.

At 7:20pm, Sofia came. She told me that: ndabwera kudzacheza, ana anga agona kale (I have come to chat because my children are already asleep). As we were chatting, she started telling me that: dzulo Rosemary amalira, ndiye lero ndinapita (yesterday Rosemary was crying and today I went) to ask her what she was crying for. Ndiye anandiuza kuti banja langa latha, amuna anga akuti sakundifuna, ndiye ndikudandaula chifukwa palibe wina amene ndingagone naye kuchipinda. Ndipo dzulo usiku, ndinizuka kukhala pa khonde kumalira, ndimaginiza kuti abwera, akuti akukakwatira mkazi wina (she told me that: I got divorced my husband is no longer interested in me and getting worried because there is no one to spend a night with in my bedroom then yesterday I woke up and sat on the veranda and started crying I thought he would come back but he said he had gone to marry another wife). Sofia laughed and continued that: chaka chatha, February anakwatira, mwamuna wina, koma Rosemary amabwera kunyumba kumadandaula kuti mwamuna wanga nowadays kuchipinda tikungogona osapanga chilichonse olo kundigwira mabele. (last year in February she got married to another man, but Sigere was coming home to complain that she is not having sex with her husband not even grabbing her breasts). Sofia was just laughing and added that: ine banja langa linatha, sindikudandaula, komanso sindinakalame, koma Rosemary nkhalamba akufuna chigololo [sex]. (Sofia: I didn’t complain when my marriage ended even though I am not yet old, still strong. Rosemary is old yet she still wants sex). After these words she departed because her son was crying.
In the morning, when I waked up, I started washing my cloths, then I saw HB of GVH sitting down on his field, then a certain man passed by and he asked HB of GVH that: Bwanji osapita kunyumba kukakhala? (why cant you go home and stay?) Then he answered that: Inu bwerani mundithandize kulima (just come and help me working in the field) . Then the man answered that: Inenso ndili ndi munda wanga, inuyo muli ndalama, why can’t you hire ganyu (casual workers) to finish this part? HB of GVH didn’t answer anything.

After washing my cloths, I went to fetch some water, then on the way, I saw Thokozani washing nkhwani (pumpkin leaves) and chief Mudzi B was taking nkhwani in her cotton field, then she greeted me and said that: Masiku ano tikudy a nsima pang’ono pena chinangwa, koma masamba opanda tomato, ndalama kulibe (nowadays we just eat a little nsima sometimes cassava and vegetables without adding tomato because we don’t have money) . Then Sofia passed by with nkhwani. Florence and Hamra were also coming from the borehole and they were discussing that: Florence: Dzulo ndangodya chinangwa masana, madzulo phala. Hamra: Choncho palibe chomwe tingachite, ine ndinadza nthochi, madzulo nsima ( yesterday I just ate some cassava for lunch, then porridge for dinner, Hawa said that:there is nothing else that we can do, as for me I just ate bananas, and nsima for dinner).

At 11:35, Livia came and she started telling me that: Sorry I gave your phone number to a certain boy. I met with him today at J. village, he proposed me and I accepted, he stays in Blantyre doing business and he went at J. village to see his relatives. I asked Livia if it is chibwenzi olo banja? (is it relationship or marriage?) Then she answered that: Masiku ano kulibe mabanja, koma zibwenzi, bola adzindipatsa ya sopo. (there are no marriages nowadays, just relationships, as long as he is giving you some money for soap). (ah well, at least he’ll provide me with soap). Then she continued her journey to the borehole.

Then at 12:05, I saw Dorica coming back from the field alone. Then 2 dottas of Elube passed by with a lot of plates going to the borehole.

After lunch, I went to a certain girl, whom we interviewed at the grocery (selling mandasi). I just heard that she know how to knit decorations, then I went there to learn and teach her mine. way, I saw Tulipesi carried matemba (dry fish) on the bike. I saw Melina with thelere, but still selling ufa (HB). Then when I reached to that girl, she was interested with my decorations and I was also interested with her decorations. She started explaining how to make it, then I was just writing down, after that she start knitting and I was just watching the way she was doing it. After that I also started teaching her mine. As we were teaching other, her mother came to greet me, then she started saying that: Pepani ndinamva kuti anakuberani, zimachitika, ndiye panopa mukukhala ndi ndani usiku? (sorry I just heard that your things were stolen, it happens, then who is staying with you to night?) Then I told her that g.son of GVH, then she said that: why giving you that elder boy? There are a lot of girls in that vg, whom you can be staying with at night. That is not good, because I remember when I was a girl, my parents went to attend a certain funeral, then I was afraid to sleep alone in the house, then my mother told some of my elder brothers (2) cousins (3) to be with me in the house. On the bike. I saw Melina with thelere, but still selling ufa (HB). Then when I reached to that girl, she was interested with my decorations and I was also interested with her decorations. She started explaining how to make it, then I was just writing down, after that she start knitting and I was just watching the way she was doing it. After that I also started teaching her mine. As we were teaching other, her mother came to greet me, then she started saying that: Pepani ndinamva kuti anakuberani, zimachitika, ndiye panopa mukukhala ndi ndani usiku? Then I told her that g.son of GVH, then she said that: why giving you that elder boy? There are a lot of girls in that vg, whom you can be staying with at night. That is not good, because I remember when I was a girl, my parents went to attend a certain funeral, then I was afraid to sleep alone in the house, then my mother told some of my elder brothers (2) cousins (3) to be with me in the house.
Then midnight, I just heard some footsteps and I saw the boys touching my breasts. I asked him why he touched my breasts, because I was her relative, but they just runned away from the house (we all laughed). After that she went to work on her field. Then the girl (Lucia) started telling me that I stopped school because it was difficult to find soap and cloths (std8) after that I started working as a house girl at a certain family, but I stopped because the owner of the house was very cruel, (Balaka) we were eating different food, washing cloths everyday for her 3 children, her HB, herself, cooking without helping me, cleaning the house even weekends, she was not helping me as if the house was mine. After that, I was employed at a near by house, but I was enjoying because she was washing the cloths for her HB, she was helping me cooking, we were eating the same food. But I stopped because a certain boy proposed me, then I accepted, but I worked there for 3 years, and after staying for 1,5 years, in relationship with that boy, he told me to stop working and he will be providing everything and I stopped. Indeed he was giving me soap, lotion, cloths, money K2000. He was working somewhere else. The relationship ended because my g.mother went where my boyfriend was staying. She told him that: don’t get married to that girl she has got 2 kids (while I don’t have any), her mother died with prostitution, (while my mother was still alive. But the boy didn’t end the relationship quickly, but because my g.mother was going there, everyday. My in-law became angry because my boyfriend drunk some poison inorder to die because of loving me. After that the relationship ended, but as of now he used to give me 500mk for soap although we divorced.

Then as of now, in Nov 2008 (las year), a certain boy proposed me, he said that: ndikukwaira (he wants to marry me), he isworking as a volunteer teacher at [nearest tradingcenter]. And I accepted inorder to see if he will be loving me as my last b.friend. On 1st Jan, I was with him and he asked me what I want to do in the future, then I told him that I want to learn knitting using machine and he said if God wishes he will pay for me. As of now he is buying soap, lotion for me, and I told my mother that: ndili ndi chibwenzi, koma adzandikwaira (I have a boyfriend and he will marry me) [has her own house next to mother’s now. Told her mother about him so that he can be free to visit her at her house, which he does indeed]. And he came inorder to know my parents and may be next month I will go and see his parents.

She continued by saying that: after working, in the field in the morning, I will be visiting you inorder to learn how to make shoes, chipewa and some of the things that I don’t know. At 4:25, heavy wind started, then I runned back home because I didn’t go by bicycle. Still on the way, the rain started, then I met with Sofia then she started telling me that: I sent Taniya my dotta to go to her father to beg some money for ufa. The she met with him on the way he was coming to see the children. Then he gave my dotta K1000 to buy ufa. He didn’t reach here but he just turned where they met and he told my dotta that: if don’t have ufa or soap just come quickly to take some money (Sofia smiled).

19 January 2009

In the morning when I waked up, I started cleaning the house, after that I washed my body and had my breakfast. Later on I saw HB of GVH weeding in cotton field then his g.son Kingsley passed by, then I sked him if Jane is back. Then he answered that: she came back yesterday with her HB, she has married with a certain boy at Balaka. Maybe she is pregnant, that’s why she just decided to get married. I asked him if it is true that her b.friend has a grocery, then he answered that: it is not true, but he used to go to his friend in the morning playing cards (they contribute 30mk per game, (8 boys), the one who wins takes the whole money. The parents accepted here but they just told the HB of Jane to come with his relatives like witness. (Feb 11: relatives have not come yet).
He [Kingsley] also continued by telling me that: my g.father wants to build a house at Balaka this year. He already bought the place where to build the house. The house will be rented to those people who want it. Then he complained that: your friend Livia is not working hard in her field, up to now he has not yet finished weeding in maize field and cotton field. After this words, he continued his journey.

Then Sofia came to beg some nkhwani (pumpkin leaves) and she started complaining that: Innocent is jealousy because her brother sent money for me to buy food. She was talking to Suset that: chimangacho akagula adya nsima mpaka liti? (if they buy maize, for how long are they going to eat?) (sure he helped her but not very much). I didn’t answer anything said Sofia, but one day I will just beat her inoder to stop gossiping. Her mother sent me to buy maize for 200mk, but I have refused because they will be thinking that I have stolen their money or ufa (maize flour). Then I saw Emra working on her field kubandira, then I saw Innocent coming back from the field of her mother with nkhwani in her hands. Then Lovely passed by coming back from the field. Then I saw Thokozani coming back from the field alone. Then mother of Dorica was also coming back from the field. Then Venesi passed by and she was telling Phingi that; ndikupita kwa J. village kukagula chimanga. (am going to J. village to buy maize). Phingi was coming back from the field.

At 1:20, Hamra passed by and she told me that: ndikuchokera ku chigayo 2kgs yokha, palibe chomwe tingachite koma mwezi wa mawa tiyamba kudya chakumunda (am coming back from the maize mill with just 2 kgs there is nothing we can do but next month we will start eating maize from the field). At 1:30, the rain started.

At 3:10, I saw Tumanene coming back from the field but there was rainfall. And GVH + 4 grand children were working in a cotton field (kubandira) with heavy rain. (HB of GVH promised to buy them ndiwio) (relish). Then Lovely passed by, she was going to her mother, then I asked why everyday morning, lunch, evening used to go to her mother, then she answered that: the day that we had heavy rainfall and wind, the roof of the house went with wind and I am now staying in the house of Fatima because they divorced and her HB is staying with his brother. (cousin, nephew of Rashida).

Later on Jasmine came and she started complaining that: my son (HB of Sofia) sent 800mk to his wife but he didn’t buy even soap for me, of-course he gave me some money to start the business of selling tomatoes but I am not satisfied. After this words she left.

Then at 5:30, I saw Innocent coming while she was crying and I asked her what happened and she told me that: buy this black thread if you want! Then I told her that: I don’t want black thread and I asked her what she wanted to use with the money, then she answered that: my mother is angry because I bought paraffin for K20. Then she wants her money, I just just took K20 and gave Innocent. After few minutes, Sofia came while laughing and I asked what happened because she went with Innocent at the maize mill. And Sofia answered that; Instead of 3kgs, Innocent bought 2kgs of maize, instead of K50 oil for zigumu (maize flour cakes) she, she bought K30, instead of paraffin K20, she bought for 15mk. And she spent that money by buying mangoes, cassava, mandasi, biscuits and she was eating on the way. Then her mother is angry because, nowadays her HB is not doing any business, no money to continue the grocery.
20 January

In the morning when I waked up, I started removing unwanted weeds around our house, then I saw HB of GVH working alone in his field (kubandira) (making ridges), then I saw Sofia planting potatoes and Innocent was making ridges alone. Tumanene passed by with potato stems to plant. Then I saw Thokozani + HB coming back from their field, then I saw Chisoni coming back from her field with masamba (vegetables) in her hands. Lovely was also coming back from the field alone, then g.son of GVH passed by with cassava. Then at 11:20, I saw mother of Dorica coming back from the field.

After lunch, Livia came to knit and she started telling me that: I would like to start cooking my own food, I will be doing some ganyu (casual labour) to find food, and I have some boyfriends, they will be helping me to find money. I will start this because my mother is not happy with me. She is just becoming angry everyday. Then Kingsley and Mavuto, his young brother came to chat, then Mavuto started saying that: yesterday we were working in the field of our grandfather while the rain was coming, because we wanted some money, for ndiwo , (relish) we told him that: kulibe ndiwo. Then he answered that: ngati mukufuna kudya lero tiyeni kumunda kwanga mukalime bandira (there is no relish you should go for casual labour for banding ). And today, he bought the head of goat (meat) at [small crossroads market]. And he told us that: if you want to eat this meat let’s go to the field, but we refused to go. Then Kingsley answered that: I lost 100mk that he gave me to buy chemicals for cotton, I told my g.father about it, then he just told me that: let’s go at the field, you should help me 5 ridges only, After helping he gave me 100 mk and said: I Am the one who took the money, you kept in a certain trouser.

Then Livia said that: I have already started ganyu 20t phando (planting station) in the field of my father, I will buy 2kgs of maize for today. I have already worked for 55mk, but I went first to work in my field. Then Chisoni, Blessings and Lovely passed by. Then Livia said that: Chisoni told her HB in S.A that her mother in-law is mistreating her and she is chasing her to go back to her vg, but she don’t know why! Then her HB called his mother, asking what is happening, then instead of explaining what is wrong, she became angry and told Chisoni that: you are a prostitute go back to your vg, then Chisoni complained that: “I was staying with your son here and we helped each other to make a passport and now he is in S.A, and you have already started saying bad words to me, because he sent some money”. I will not go back to my vg. (Livia laughed).

Then Livia continued by saying that: son of Venesi went to S.A (the one who was building the house of Pamela). She continued by saying that: that son belongs to a certain man at Liwonde, they divorced because Venesi was in relationship wit another man from [small crossroads market], but her young sister was also pregnant from the same man and she gave birth to Chisoni (we all laughed). She [Livia] continued: from end Feb - end March Most of the girls and women used to be pregnant because there are a lot of places for them to hide. You can see that the maize is growing quickly, the trees also. They used to tell one another that: we should meet in the field of -------------- woman or at such banana trees (we laughed) then her mother called her to cook, then she left.

Then a girl, who sells mandasi, said that: had I known that you know how to knit different things I could have learned a lot also. Then I encourages her to continue coming here so that she can learn what she don’t know. Then she started saying that: the owner of this house married almost 6-7 wives and all of them have got childrens. (this is 4th yr since he left, never been back in between, she also said that, he slept with Sofia one day) Then I saw GVH going back to her field. Then Jasmine was passing by selling zigumu (maize flour cakes)

Hamra passed by and she greeted me by saying that: ndatopa kudya masamba ndi nsima ndikufuna nyama (I am tired eating vegetables but I want some meat). (I just smiled) and she continued by saying that: timadya nyama nthawi yogulitsa
21 Jan 2009

In the morning, when I waked up, I started removing unwanted grasses around our house, then I saw HB of GVH sitting down on his field. After that, I saw Sofia making ridges in her field, then Livia was passing by and she greeted me and started saying that: have heard that Jane has married a certain man at Balaka? Then I said no! she continued by telling me that: although she has married to that man, he has another wife, but is not good because Jane is still young, she could have choosed a boy who has never married. But those women who already married and divorced, it’s good to marry to a man who already married. (she laughed). Will know what it’s like to take care of. So for women who have children it is better to marry a man who was married before.

She also continued that: at home we ate nsima with nkhwani (pumpkin leaves), this morning. Then Hilda passed by and she said that: ndikukagula chimanga kwa (I am going to buy at [small crossroads market] 52mk per kg.

At 1:14, the rain started, then the HB of GVH runned away from his field and sat on our veranda, then he started telling me that: ndikufuna nsima! (I want some nsima), then I told him that: ndadya kale, mwachedwa (you are late I have already eaten my lunch). Then I saw GVH chatting with Thokozani and GVH was saying that: ndipita ku dimba kukadzala mpunga. (I will go at my garden to plant some rice)

At 2:30, Sofia came to chat, then we saw HB of Amila passing by, then Sofia started laughing and said that: yesterday Amila and her HB were fighting in their field, but I don’t know what happened. Then she [Sofia] continued by saying that: my mother in-law wanted to sell a goat from 3000 -2000mk, then the one who wanted to buy said that: I have 1000mk, then Jasmine said that: this is not good! Because it is already hunger season, then you want to buy at that price? It’s good for me to keep my goat.

Livia came to knit and she started saying that: masana tadya nkhwani popanda nsima,kulibe ufa (for lunch we just ate some pumpkin leaves without nsima, because we don’t have maize flour). (G thinks people usually tell the truth when telling what they ate). Koma amayi akana 1000mk anthu amafuna kugula mbuzi. (but my mother refused 1000mk, then agreed, someone wanted to buy the goat) The rain continued and Livia went, then back quickly.

At 4:40, Dorica came to knit and she started telling me that: Ididn’t go to school today because I was helping my mother weeding in cotton field. Then I asked her if it is true that Jane married to the man with another wife and she answered that: may be he has another wife, but I don’t know. And I asked her why the marriage of Rosemary ended. Then she answered that: her HB is my uncle, when I asked him, he told mw that: I know how to cook, and I always manage to find food for myself, only not for the big family, that’s why I divorced. And I also asked her if he has married another wife and Dorica said no. He is staying alone in his house.

Then Rosemary passed by - still not talking to me because of the same story of a thief (Ndaba) son in-law. Then I asked Dorica why most of the boys from 10-15 years, don’t go to school in this vg. Then she answered that: most of them they just want to go to South Africa to find job.

Then Chenawe passed by, she greeted me and said that: ndukudwala m’mimba (am suffering from stomach ache). Dorica continued by saying that: most of the people are just eating masamba [green leafs] for lunch, then nsima or phala at supper. People are sill waiting for money that they worked for MASAF. No more ganyu nowadays.
said Dorica. Most of the people borrowed some money to those women with HB in S.A, inorder to give back after receiving from MASAF. End February, people will start eating maize and maungu (pumpkins) (said Dorica). She left at 6:20pm.

22 January 2009

In the morning, when I waked up, I started making ridges for potatoes, then I saw Sofia passing by. Then she greeted me ans said that: I don’t go to the field because my son is ill. (malaria). After making phala (porridge), I will go with him at [nearest trading center] hospital. And Livia also passed by going to the borehole, then I heard her telling Lovely that: I am going at [small crossroads market] to buy maize 2kgs, my mother gave me some money. And she has gone to her son at Balaka to take some tomatoes and to beg some money for ufa (maize flour), but maize at [small crossroads market] is at 78mk 1kg. Someone else is selling from Zomba not Admarc. Then I saw GVH going to her field, then I saw Rosemary making ridges near her house. Then HB of Mphatso (dotta of Rosemary) passed by with 1kg of ufa. (mgaiwa) = hard nsima for 2-3 people.

At 9:10, Innocent came and she started saying that: I have stolen a small chicken from my mother and I sold K130. I would like to buy soap. Then Dorica came to greet me, then she told me that: today I didn’t go to school may be tomorrow. I asked her why? And she answered that: ndinangofuna kuti ndisapite (I just didn’t want to go). Then I saw Esnart coming back from the field.

After lunch, I went at [small crossroads market] just to see who is selling, then I saw 2 women who we interviewed selling mandasi 10mk each, the other one tomatoes only. Then the other woman whom I interviewed selling usipa (small dried fish). Then 2 women selling second hand cloths but their HB were near by helping each other selling. 1 woman was selling paraffin using a bottle top 10-15-30-50 kwacha but people were busy buying, then I didn’t talk to her. 2 young girls were selling mangoes for their parents, the woman who sales cassava was still selling (the one who says it’s for her dotta) but only few people were just moving around. Most of them were buying tobacco, paraffin, cassava and mangoes.

A certain girl was selling in a shop, but a lot of boys were busy playing bawo, the owner of the shop was also there (a man), then children were busy buying sweets, then I didn’t talk to her. After 40 minutes, I came back home. I just greeted the business women and some of them were saying that: we are busy working in the field and people are not buying because no enough ganyu (casual labour) now.

Then at home Sofia came to greet me and she started saying that the 1st HB of Livia came to give her some money, but he didn’t find her. Then he said that: he will come another day. Jasmine came to borrow a bicycle, the HB said that he wanted to go at Balaka to buy matches for sale. Then I borrowed them.

Then the girl who sells mandasi at grocery, came to knit, then her mother gave her chitenje (a wrapper) to give me. She said that: sorry because the thieves came to steal, have this chitenje as a gift. Then I said thanks and received it. She learned how to make small shoes and chipewa (a hut). At 5:20, she left (she was just happy that she managed how to make 2 things only for a day. And she said that she is planning to open a shop to be selling zipewa (huts), shoes, decorations. She was happy because she just knew how to make decoration but not other things.

At 6:10pm, Phingi came & she told me that: sorry I will give back your bicycle tomorrow afternoon bcoz I want to send Livia at Balaka hospital, her dotta is still ill eyes. then she [Phingi] continued that: I don’t have money to continue business even to buy food, my son said that: I should go and take tomatoes for sell on Saturday. Then I asked her why she is not going for ganyu (casual labour) with her HB, Innocent + grand dotta, only one day inorder to find money to buy food and she answered that:
sindilima ganyu, mwina ndiyamba (I don’t go for casual labour, maybe I will start) but she didn’t give me enough answer. After that she left. And HB of GVH, finished working in his field at 6:05pm for 5 ridges and a certain woman who passed by in the morning was coming back where she went at 6:00pm, and she started laughing and asked him that: why can’t you just go home! But he didn’t answer anything, and the woman laughed by saying that: may be you will die before harvesting and you will not eat your maize, he didn’t answer anything.

23 January 2009

In the morning, I started washing my clothes, then I saw Chisoni going to the field alone, then Sofia was still making ridges for potatoes. Later on, I saw Lovely coming back from the field. After washing my clothes, I went to fetch some water at the borehole, then I found Sweetness, Elube, Hilda fetching some water. Then Elube was saying that: ndikukaphika zigumu (am going to bake maize flour cakes), then Joyce answered that: bola inu ndi chimanga, koma ine dzulo ndangodya nandolo popanda nsima (lucky you! You have some maize but as for me I just ate pigeon peas) (madzulo) (in the evening). Then on the way I met with Thokozani and Mphatso (dotta of Rosemary) and they were saying that: dzulo m’mamawa sindinadye, masana ndinangodya masamba, madzulo phala. (Yesterday in the morning I did not eat anything, at lunch I just ate vegetables, in the evening I just ate porridge)

At 10, I started knitting, then GVH came to beg masamba (vegetables) from our garden, then I gave her. Then she started saying that: anthu anga m’mudzi muno akuvutika, akudya masamba okha, nandolo anatha, madzulo phala. Ganyu akuvuta kumupeza, koma chimanga ayamba kudya kuyambira 20 February. (people of my village are suffering, they eat vegetables only, they no longer have pigeon peas, in the evening porridge. Casual labour cannot be easily found, but they will start eating maize from 20 February)

After lunch, I went to greet Phingi, and I found her eating phala (porridge) and and she was preparing masamba (vegetables) for dinner. And Sofia joined us, then Phingi started explaining that: last night I told my HB that: it’s good to divorce because I am the one who is searching for food, we are not helping each other. Then my HB answered that: I cannot go back because I don’t have parents, we promised each other from the beginning that: we will be staying together till death. (Sofia laughed). Then she continued that: Livia yesterday she steal my eggs and ate alone without my permission, this is bad.

Then Sofia started saying that: Chikondi was fighting with her HB yesterday but I don’t know why? And Chikondi was saying that: when Jannake will come, she will give me some money to feed my children because I gave the surname of Getrude to one of my son. Then Florence answered that: that means she will give everybody in this vg some money not only you, because she came for every women in this vg. Then Chikondi answered that: I will go and take some medicine and I kow that she will give me. Then Phingi answered that: but women of this village used to gossip. This visitors came inorder to learn and understand life in our villages not to give you money to feed your families, why can’t you just start business or ganyu (casual labour) inorder to find what you want, (Sofia laughed).

Then Sofia continued that: when I was at Balaka with my HB, we were fighting, may be because of putting a lot of salt in relish. And I was using a big stick to revenge. After five times, he stopped. Then Phingi answered that: I remember in the past with my HB, we were also fighting, and some years ago he married another wife. (we were 2 wives), the other one was 7 months pregnant, and I was 8 months pregnant. One day, I went to see my in-law, when I was coming back, I met with her going to the same in-law. Then when she saw me, she started saying that: this week is mine, mwamuna akhala akugona kwathu (the husband will be sleeping at my house). Then I didn’t answer anything. After few minutes, I saw her running with a big stick and she broke my leg with that stick. And I revenged by breaking of her foetus, everybody was afraid to stop the fighting. After 40 minutes, I went back while she was going to the hospital. Then, I went to my elder brother to explain what happened for me to beat her. Kenaka a mfumu anayitana ankhoswe onse (then the chief called all the marriage witnesses), then they said that: my HB is the one who did wrong by getting married to 2 wives. (G: I think in past people did not marry several wives, therefore they said it was wrong, while now it happens (I asked why wrong, since they are muslims?). The same day, I
heard that the other wife miscarried and the marriage ended with the other wife. After a week, I gave birth to a baby girl, and my HB was happy and went to South Africa to start working, while in S.A, he sent some money but I was still angry and I gave that money to his parents. One day I went to the market and a certain boy proposed me by saying that: muli pa banja? (are you married?) Then I said ayi. Ndikukufunani banja (No. [Then he said] I want to marry you), then I accepted the same time. I didn’t even tell anybody that there is a certain man who proposing me. “Ndinabwezera” =I was taking revenge. [J: revenge, was angry, G explained further]

But they just saw him in the morning when he waked up, [J: G says it was "marriage", meaning that/so they were staying together] my relatives asked me why I decided to get married before divorcing. Then I answered that: osandifunsa ndikudziwa zomwe ndikuchita (don’t ask me I know what am doing). The same day the HB in S.A sent money and I didn’t receive, I just gave to his parents. After 8 months the new HB told me that: your relatives are not happy with me and they said that your HB will come soon, then it’s good to divorce because I am afraid. Then I told him that: chabwino palibe vuto! Koma chikhale chibwenzi (its OK, no problem! It should just be a relationship) and he accepted. After 2 weeks I went to take all the money that my HB sent to buy food and his relatives gave me, they ever just keeping the money without using. After a month, I saw my HB coming back from S.A with a lot of things like: a bed, new cloths, a nice lamp, blankets but I was just angry, I stayed almost 2 hours without talking to him. Later on, he told me that: please undikhululukire (forgive me) sindizakwariranso mkazi wina ndiwe wekha (I will never get marry to another woman again you are the only one). Then I accepted but I told him not to talk or greet any woman from other vgs. Then he accepted. (Ndinali ndi nsanje ndichifukwa ndimawauza mawu amenewa) (I said these words because I was jealous)

After that she [Phingi] started saying that: the first HB of Livia came yesterday, he said that: he wanted to take the child, but I was not here, I went to see some friends. But I cannot accept because he has another another wife. I remember when he divorced with Innocent, he wanted to kill the child in order to be rich. And after divorcing, Innocent was in relationship with a boy from [nearest tradingcenter] and she was pregnant. When Livia was 2 months pregnant, she went back to her ex-HB up to 8 months, but when she was there, the HB told her that: this pregnant is not mine, then when you will give birth to a child just kill him/her and cheat your parents that you miscarried. (She got married with the 2nd HB when the child was born). Then they divorced for the second time because he was beating her, sometimes not giving her some food. And now he came to take the child, I cannot accept.

At 3, the rain started, then I went back home to knit. When the rain stopped, I saw HB of GVH going to the field, then Rosemary passed by and she started telling HB of GVH that: Njala, masana ndadya masamba oopanda nsima ndiye mphamvu ndilibe, sindinapite kumunda (hunger, at lunch I just ate some vegetables without nsima that’s why am not strong).

Pamela and Tinenenji came to greet me, then they were saying that: someone else at J. vg has got maize and he told people that they can take 1 bag and after harvesting, they should give back 3bags, but people in Mudzi B didn’t go to take. Pamela said that: some people are just eating masamba, nandolo, mseula (vegetables, pigeon peas, nseula) but without nsima. Then Kingsley passed by telling people to go at [small crossroads market] to receive money for MASAF tomorrow. And people were happy.

24 January 2009

When I waked up at 6, the rain started, then I saw Innocent coming back from the maize mill with 3kgs of ufa, she came home inorder to wait for the rain and she started saying that: [Innocent:] my brother at Balaka said that he will be helping my mother by giving her some money to buy ufa for nsimu and zigumu (maize flour for nsima and maize flour cakes) because most of the people are not buying tomatoes.

At 9, there was still rainfall, then Kondwani and Sofia came to greetme. As we were chating, they
start saying that: HB of Amila divorced because of hunger, he went back to his mother with 1 child and left the wife with 3 kids. Sofia also said that: Mavuto g.son of GVH, has gone to receive money for orphans and a blanket. Kondwani answered that: mother in-law came to take the g.son because they are just staying without eating nsima, but phala and masamba (Porridge and vegetables). Sofia also said that: I saw Livia one day with mr Chikombo in his field chatting, when she came home, she cheated me that: he wanted chipewa, but I think ali pa chibwenzi. (they are in a relationship)

Kondwani said that: mwina tiyamba kudya chimanga pa (maybe we will start eating maize on) 16 February. She also said that: Thokozani amandaula kuti akungodya phala, ndiye mwana amafunsa kuti: kodi tinasiya kudya nsima? (Thokozani was complaining that they just eat porridge then the child asked that: did we stop eating nsima?) But Thokozani failed to answer.

After lunch, the rain stopped and Sofia came and told me that: people are going to receive some money for MASAF at [small crossroads market] and I cannot manage to go because my son is sick, and I would like to beg you that: if possible go and receive for me. Then I went there on behalf of her. Then I met with Pamela and I asked her about the HB that she told me. Then Pamela answered that: I got married, we only stayed for 3 weeks and divorced. I tried to ask her why she decided to divorce, and she said that: I worked alone in the field and he helped me only for a week. Then I just told him basi banja latha, dzipitani (we are divorced just go), then he just packed and left. Then Kondwani joined us and she started saying that: I sent my dotta in the morning to go to my ex-HB to beg some ufa (maize flour) and she came back with almost 10kgs of ufa. (She smiled).

Then I heard Florence and Chikondi saying that: if Jannake will come and ask some questions, we will not give her correct answers because she already asked us a lot of questions. Then Chikondi said that: when she will come, she will give me some money to feed my children, and Chenawe answered that: she will give me some medicine. Then Teleza answered that: when she came here at the beginning, she said that: she just came here on order to understand our daily life, not to give you some money or medicine, and she said that: if you don't want to be asked any question palibe vuto (there no problem). Teleza said to G: you can see now that I am buying soap and lotion and after this I will be buying ufa. So you remember! So that when Janneke comes you don't have to come and ask me bcoz you already know! Everybody from Mudzi B was saying that: ndikalandira ndalama za MASAF, ndikagula chimanga ku Admarc ku Balaka 52mk 1kg osati kwa ma vendor (when we receive money from MASAF we will buy maize from ADMARC at Balaka 52mk 1 kg not from venders). Except Blessings, Lovely, Esnart and Nola. Then Filimona passed by with 5kgs of ufa, we waited up to 4pm but no-one else came to give them some money. People were still waiting and others slept on the floor, then Pamela told me that: let's back home, we will come tomorrow, I would like to cook some nsima with nandolo (pigeon peas). Then on the way, she [Pamela] started saying that: most of the people didn't understand that you came here only for a research that's why Chikondi with her friends were saying that: when Jannake will come, she will give them some money. But if she will give her, we will also come to beg.

When I reached home, I started cooking nsima then Thokozani and a certain woman were passing by and heard Thokozani telling her friend that: mundigaile ufa, ndikaphike nsima (share some maize flour with me, I should cook nsima). Then her friend answered that: I just have 1kg only and I cannot manage to give you.

25 January 2009

In the morning when I waked up, I started removing unwanted plants around our house. Then I saw Livia making ridges and HB of GVH was also making ridges. Then I saw Phingi coming back from the field, then mother of Dorica was also coming back from the field. Then Sofia came to tell me that: my son is still ill, go and receive my money for MASAF. Then I accepted. On the way, I was with Amila and I asked her about her HB and she started saying that: we divorced because I
was working alone in the field, going for ganyu in order to find food, then I told him that: it's good for me to be staying alone. And he accepted, but we have stayed almost 14yrs in marriage. She continued by saying that: he gave a radio to his son. I went to my uncle and his uncle to explain what is happening in our family and I told them that I would like to end the marriage and they agreed, but one of my son is staying with my uncle. Then Jasmine joined us and she started saying that: Suset went to her ex-HB (my son) at J. village to beg some money to buy ufa (maize flour), but the ex-HB chased her by saying that: ndili ndi mkazi, iwenso uli ndi mwamuna (I have a wife and you have a husband). Amila continued by saying that: my cousin Emra, when she heard that her friend Ainessi has got a child, she went with ufa full basin, 2 pieces of zitenje and a dress. And now she came home to beg some ufa, but I didn’t give her because she had 2 bags of maize and she gave 1 bag to Ndaba her boyfriend (Jasmine laughed). Jasmine also said that: am getting worried because I cooked zigumu (maize flour cakes) for 520mk but at night my HB ate zigumu for 150mk. I don’t know it will make profits in this business, when we reached at [small crossroads market] some vgs were receiving some money, but Mudzi A and Mudzi B were the last villages. Grace started saying that: Innocent have got my 50mk, she borrowed mandasi and Elube said that: Innocent also came home and borrowed zigumu for 70mk, cheating that her mother is the one who sent her. Then mother of Dorica started complaining that: Headmaster was telling Dorica that: don’t go at [small crossroads market] school come at [nearest primary school], then Dorica answered that: you chased me and I cannot come back there. Then the headmaster answered that: mwinya uli ndi chibwenzi kumeneko (maybe you have a boyfriend there), but Dorica didn’t answer anything. After 35 minutes (11:50) people from Mudzi B started receiving their money and I received for Sofia 2400mk. People from Mudzi A 2 received. Naima’s HB received, but both Thokozani and HB received, Tulipesi and wife received. On the way back home, everybody was at [small crossroads market] market buying tomato - usipa (small dried fish), mangoes, biscuits and mandasi, body lotion. Then Jasmine told me to tell Innocent that: they need to contribute and buy maize tomorrow at [nearest trading center] Admarc 52mk pe kg, but when I told Innocent she didn’t answer anything, when I reached home I gave direct the money to Sofia and she said thanks a lot and she started telling me that my Grand Mother GVH will receive money from 13 people including her self she sent some young boys in other vgs to be working on behalf of her.

At [small crossroads market] I saw her going 4 times but with different names only that I didn’t realize what was happening at home I found a big snake on the window then mwanyakli is the one who runned and killed it with a big stick. Grace said that I hired ganyu (Amila) and I gave her the money but up to now she has not yet finished at 1:30 heavy rain and wind started.

I started knitting then the girl who sells mandasi joined me and she was just complaining the most of the people in her vlg are just sleeping eating masamba (vegetables) sometimes phala (porridge) only. Then Venesi came to greet me and she told me that ngagula ma unit’s ndikufuna ndi yimbe nawo (I have bought airtime I want to use your) phone then I gave her the cell phone then she was talking to a certain man and they were discussing that Kodi ubwera? Ndikukudikira chifukwa mawa ndikuchokapo ndikupita ku ADMARC. Dzulo unandinamiza kuti ubwera ndiyi usalephere (are you coming? Am waiting for you because tomorrow am going to ADMARC. yesterday you cheated me you said that you are coming, so don’t fail) after that she left (I didn’t ask her anything so that I can hear a lot of stories then GVH came to beg masamba then I gave her. The rain continued up to dark hours.

In the morning when I waked up I started cleaning in the house then mawanyakali came to borrow a
bicycle, then I saw HB of GVH making ridges alone. Then Sofia came and she told me that ndikupita kuchipatala ndi mwana (am going to the hospital with my child). After Livia came and she told me that amai apita kukagula chimanaga ku Balaka ADRMAC tasonkhelana ndalama (my mother has gone to buy maize at Balaka ADMARC we have contributed some money) but up to 7:00am I didn’t see any one going to the field and I just guessed that most of them went to buy maize at ADMARC.

Then Innocent came and she told me that “I have came back! I wanted to escort Sofia to the hospital the GVH told me that Tikupita kwa asing’anga ndiye ubelere kunyumba (we are going to the traditional doctor therefore you should go back home) two men were passing by and I heard them saying that Amuna awo HB of Elube went to work in Balaka: Amuna awo a Elube anayamba ntchito ku Balaka.(the husband of Elube found work in Balaka)

Then HB of Fatima passed by and Pamela was coming home then I asked her about the marriage of Fatima and she told me that everyday HB of Fatima used to go and pick the child because Fatima said that- Unandipeza ndilebe mwana ndiye ngakhale banja linatha udzibwera tsiku lililonse kudzatenga mwana.( you found me without a child although we divorced you should be coming every day to collect the child)

Ata 12:50 Sofia came back from the t. Doctor and I went there to see the child. Then I just told Sofia that its good to go to the hospital because the doctor is the one who can know what kind of medicine to give the child then Sofia accepted to go to the hospital as we were charting she started telling me that the money that she received for MASAF, she already hired ganyu 500mk, 500mk bought an umbrella, 1000mk maize, 50mk paraffin 100mk paid to the T. Doctor.

Then Venesi came saying that she his already bought 3 plates at nsawali airtime, 1 decoration (from me 100) [J: to make the bedroom look nice, maybe for new boyfriend, speculates G] lotion & she will go to buy maize on Thursday at ADMARC. Livia said that I gave my mother 1000mk to buy food and she said she will buy 50kgs at Balaka ADMARC 500mk I borrowed to my g mother and I have paid back 70mk I ate zigumu (maize flour cake) to Elube 50mk Grace I ate mandasi 50mk I bought cassava 30mk mangoes and 600mk I have kept in order to buy an umbrella.

Then I saw Esnart going to the maize, then Thokozani was coming back from the maize mill, then Sofia started saying that Charity burned the roof of the house of her sister after quarreling with her brother. Then Saibi is now staying in the house of her mother but as of now her child is ill and she is admitted at Balaka hospital but Charity has married at Balaka with a certain boy but she, didn’t tell her mother she just departed. The Sofia started eating phala (porridge) [J: Gertrude explains: maybe lazy, or tired of only having nkhwani for ndiwo] while Livia was eating rice and in the morning Livia said she ate cassava

Then Venesi bought 50 cents time and borrowed my phone then she was talking to the same man saying that Wasowa zikuyenda uli kuti (I miss you, are you ok, where are you?) (while smiling) Grace also borrowed my phone she bought air time and she was talking to some one else saying that ndikufuna ndalama ya sopo. Komanso chakudza ndilibe (I need money for soap and I don’t have food) Grace said that she wanted to knit and we went home together, Ada, Ellesi, Dorica, Tinenenji joined me and they were saying that as of now they are not very busy they are just making ridges for potatoes in the morning.

Then I stopped knitting and started braiding the hair of Grace and everybody was very interested after Grace I braid the hair of Ada. Then Tinenenji started saying that Lero tadya nsima ndi nsomba (today we ate nsima with fish) and Ada said that ife tigula mawa masamba tidzadya tikamaliza ndalama (we will buy vegetables tomorrow we will eat until we finish the money) (all girls laughed) then zione said she will pay school fees half of the money.

Then GVH came and she told me that my HB sent me here he said that you must cook this egg plants for him (she brought onions, oil, 3 tomatoes and 6 egg pants) he said that you are the one who can know now to prepare this with rice not me. Then I received and cooked for him after that all girls
deported it was already 5:40pm. After cooking I went to give him and he said that Zikomo kwambiri ndakumbukira kale - kale ndili mnyamata ndimkakonda kudya ndiwo zimenezi (thank you very much I have remembered those days - those days when I was still a youth, I liked eating this type of relish) then I went back home.

At 7:20pm Jasmine came to tell me that Tomorrow there will be a meeting for CUMO at Nkhumba then she [Jasmine] also said that ndina kagula chimanga kubalaka 16kgs for 1120mk ku ADMARC chimanga chinatha (thank you very much I have remembered those days - those days when I was still a youth, I liked eating this type of relish) then she also bought airtime she did she wanted to talk with her dotta at Zomba then I gave her.

27 January

In the morning when I waked up ida came to borrow my bicycle she said that she wanted to go at [large commercial estate] to do something else the I gave her. Then I saw HB of GVH weeding alone later on I saw Thokozani + HB coming back from the field with nkhwani in her hands Livia passed by with there’re. then Teleza was going to fetch some water then she started telling me that sindinapite kumunda ndikudwala malungo and she [Teleza] continued by saying that tell Jannake that I have received money for MASAF and I bought maize don’t come to ask me what I have done with that money (she laughed).

Then I went to tell Jasmine that am ready to go at nkhumba (CUMO) and I found her [Jasmine] eating phala (porridge) and Sofia was also eating phala. On the way to nkhumba I met with Auleria coming back from the maize mail with 30kg of Ufa (maize flour) that ndasangalala chifukwa lero ndikadaya nsima masana (am happy because I have eaten nsima at lunch). Suset started saying that last week Thursday I went to Balaka market then I met with my exe boy and he bought some potatoes for me (she smiled)

At [nearest primary school] we found people already gathered in there groups then alangazi (extension worker) started talking to the Group of Jasmine. Alangizi told the group of Jasmine that you will not take loan today because on the computer it shows that there is still balance of 2100mk while it is not like that then you need to wait when ever they will correct that mistake you will be able to take loan everybody was angry and said that: muwauze kuti sitidzatengaso ngongole mungotipatsa ndalama zomwe tinasonkha (tell them that we will never take the loan again, just give us the money that we contributed) then alangizi encouraged them that musadandaule mudzalandira (don’t worry you will receive) (we just spent 10 minutes) on the way back Jasmine said that its good to stop taking loan because we failed to work in our fields thinking that they will give us money while not.

I saw children of Elube cleaning a lot of plates at the borehole. Then I saw Chisoni and her in-law going at the maize mill with full baskets of maize.

After lunch I went to take my bicycle then I found Suset and Jasmine complaining that Mr Ntawanga received money for MASAF 5 times with different names and now after selling cotton he is planning to go to south Africa and Jasmine answered that he already sold one bicycle preparing for the journey and Suset didn’t work in MASAF because she was ill but they didn’t write down her name so that she can receive money chief of K. village received almost 22 thousand with different names and GVH more than 30 thousand with different names this is not good only God will deal with them said Jasmine.

When Suset left Innocent started laughing and said that. The one who gave 2nd Child to Suset [father of first child is brother of Innocent] has got another wife and he used to come to Suset just to eat nsima then going back to another wife she was in std 8 she had a lot of boyfriends (elders) that’s why she is not looking healthy. Then Pamela called me saying that Molly has come she wants you to braid
her hair and Tinenenji then accepted as we were chatting anatenga started saying that Amila & HB were fighting in the field using stones sticks and hoes people were failing to stop them.

Molly answered that we are about to start eating green maize and during harvesting most of the women used to steal some maize from their HB putting in a tin with clothes on top cheating the HB that I am going to wash my cloths or blanket at the borehole, while going some where else to sell (we all laughed) and with the money they just buy biscuits, mandasi but not relish because the HB can ask where you got the money and the HB also steal some maize to sell and with the money they go to buy Kachasu (traditionally distilled beer) some times relish. They all forget that they were sleeping without eating any food.

Then I saw HB of Sofia from Balaka. I greeted him and he said that ndikupita kukamuona mwana ndamva kuti akudwala.(am going to see my child who is sick)

28th January

In the morning when I waked up I saw Jasmine coming home and she told me to go and help her to make Zigumu, then I accepted then she started telling me that ndayamba geni yogulitsa fodya (I have started a business of selling tobacco) [she showed me and it was full basket] [Jasmine bought from farmers, dries it herself. Hamra likes to smoke, came to buy]. then I greeted Sofia and she started telling me that Amuna anga anabwera anagona kunkuno koma sanandipatse ndalama akuti alibe ndipo amanena kuti akandimangira nyumba basi banja litha. Koma ine sindinayankhe chilichonse (my husband came he spent a night here but he did not give me any money he said he does not have and he was saying that he is going to construct a house for me then we should get divorced but I did not answer any thing) then she started eating porridge even Jasmine was also eating porridge as we were making zigumu people were not coming to buy and Jasmine said that anthu sakugula chifukwa ali nsima ndikaguulitsa mawa kwa [small crossroads market] (People are not buying (maizeflour cakes) because they have maize ( for making nsima) I will sell tomorrow at [small crossroads market]).

Then I saw GVH coming and she brought thelere (okra) for me she said that amuna anga anandiuza kuti ndikupatseni thelere (my husband told me to give you this okla) I received and I said thanks. Then Lovely joined us and she started saying that Emra and Ainessi and HB has gone to Ch. village to see her mother in - law (we all laughed) but last week she [Lovely] was not eating nsima But nandolo (pigeon peas) and masamba (vegetables ) only and she came home with a small plate to beg some ufa and I gave her. Then Jasmine cooked nsima with nkhwani (pumpkin leaves) and Sofia cooked nsima with usipa (small dried fish) GVH passed by with 7 chambo.

At Lunch I went back home the Sofia told me that this women is in relation ship with HB of Magret Wasi (a woman with black sports on her face) at 2pm I went at mbella to see who is selling. Then at the only one man selling cassava

Then at [nearest tradingcenter] only one woman was selling tomatoe. Two young girls selling mandasi and I woman selling usipa. Only few people were buying I greated the woman who was selling tomatoes (fat woman) and she told me that sizikuyenda chifukwa anthu alibe ndalama kuli njala (business is not very good because a lot of people do not have money because of the hunger) . The other woman who aws selling usipa said the same words. The woman who was selling in a shop was not there it was closed. The sign of the rain started and I runned back home.

A certain woman from [nearest primary school] came to greet me and she started complaining that thieves came to her house and they took 4 chickens and 2 basins while she was sleeping and she realized in the morning when she worked up at 5:55pm I saw Venesi moving a could with the same man on the way back she started saying that ndinapita ku Balaka ADMARC kukagula chimanga koma sindinachipeze ndiye ndagula kwa ma (I went to Balaka ADMARC to buy maize but I did not find it then I bought from ) vendor ½ kg (25 kgs at K1,880 and soap I also bought shoes, trouser blouse for my dotta then she left. Then Elube passed by with a mortar and she was telling Sofia, that I would like to pound my maize tomorrow at 8:20 G. Son of GVH came to sleep.
29th January

In the morning when I woke up I started washing my cloths then GVH came to greet me and she told me that my HB is ill that’s why he is not working in the field since yesterday. But I am going to plant rice at dambo (the garden). Sofia also came and she started saying that at least my son is getting better today. Then I saw Livia making ridges alone in the field.

At 10 I went to greet Jasmine I found her eating phala. Then I told her that its good to be drying masamba (vegetables) in order to eat in December and she accepted. Then Sofia was busy cooking nsima and masamba Pamela came to buy tomatoes. Then Jasmine said that I will eat nsima plus nkhwani (pumpkin leaves) but at dinner I will my chicken

At 10:40 I went back home to prepare the journey to [small crossroads market]. At 11:20 Innocent came home and she started telling me that the friend of my mother from K. village came home and she started telling my mother that There is a certain boy who is looking for a wife and she choosed me to be the wife of that boy. And my mother accepted she told me at night that may be I can die soon and it’s good for you to get married while I am still alive. Then my mother continued that the boy will come to see you and indeed he came but I didn’t like his body structure, even his face is not nice. But still more I will accept may be he is the one that God kept for me (she laughed) and he said that he will marry me soon after harvesting. But I told him that I have a child and he said no problem I will be ready to take care of the child. She continued that Aunt Gertrude ndidzikuwuzani chilichonse momwe zikuyendera (I will be informing you how everything is going on). I will keep you informed.

At 2:10 I prepared my journey at [small crossroads market] then Livia came and said that I would like to go and buy cooking oil just wait for me and we departed at 2:30 on the way Livia said that I will go at Balaka tomorrow to buy maize for Zigumu (maize flour cakes) and I told her that: I will also go there to buy thread on the way she [Livia] was saying that ndasangalala ndili ndi mwamuna wofuna kundikwatira.

At [small crossroads market] only 2 young girls selling zigumu 1 woman tomatoes I woman sugar cane (not new faces) 2 men selling second hand cloths I didn’t see any - one coming to buy but it was already 3:05 I stayed up to 3:45 but no changes 1 girl was also selling matemba (vegetables) Livia bought sugar cane (10mk) zigumu 20mk oil 20mk. On the way we met with a man whom I saw with Venesi then Livia said that this man is in relationship with Venesi maybe she want to get married we will see. She laughed and said that we are close to cotton season a lot of marriages now. She also said that Evelin is in relationship with HB of Elube and HB of Nola but she used to go to the hospital and receive ARVS she also said that Suset has got a lot of boyfriends that’s why she is not healthy. Teleza used to go to the hospital for family planning (injection) that’s why she is not becoming pregnant but she has a lot of zibwenzi (boyfriends). At 4:40pm heavy rain and heavy wind started up to 9:40pm

30th January

In the morning when I walked up on bicycle I prepared my journey to Balaka to buy thread and Innocent was going to buy maize for zigumu. on the way I saw Magda and HB weeding in groundnuts field and Teleza also was weeding in her maize field. Then on the way Innocent started complaining that her father has got 5000mk that he kept from his grocery but he is saying that he cannot by maize for food her will be eating what my mother is buying my mother is not happy but the problem is that he started the life of not buying anything at home since when my mother gave birth to the 2nd child up to now and it is difficult for him to stop. Still more we don’t know what he used to buy with his money. Without nsima he used to be angry.
At Balaka Innocent bought tomatoes for sale 200MK, she didn’t find the maize then she didn’t buy. I went at the bank to withdrawal 2000MK then I bought 12 balls for 1020MK of thread blue, green, white, with soap 1 bar for washing my body at 80MK & lotion 200MK [=500 ml, app 5 months], hair oil 150MK. [Jasmine was happy that G went with Innocent to Balaka, bcoz Innocent may be afraid to steal if G is with her].

On the way back Innocent said that: When I will get married to that man soon after harvesting, maybe we will be staying in Balaka & I will give my mother the maize that I will harvest (she smiled). Then we met with Fatima in her vil, I greeted her & she said that "banja litha. Sindidzabweranso (we divorced and I will not come back). " I failed to ask her a lot bcoz I was with Innocent, but she promised that she will come to chat. Still on the way Innocent sais that: Maybe Fatima has got another man who wants to marry her, that’s why she is not coming back at Mudzi B.

At [small crossroads market] I just found 3 young girls selling mandasi, another one matemba, another mangoes & tomatoes for their parents.

I reached home at 1.25pm.I found Jasmine eating phala and Sofia was eating nsima. And I found Sofia already kept some nsima for me in a container with thelere. Sofia said: This is your first time cycling at the way to balaka and back, I thought you would be tired so kept some nsima for you.

At 3 pm I went at [nearest tradingcenter] just to see if the women were still selling. Then I found 5 women one selling tomatoes, 3 women selling cassava and another one still saving maize for nsima. I greeted them and asked how the business was going on. And they said that bola lero mwina chifukwa anthu alandira ndalama za MASAF ( At least today , may be because people have received money for MASAF) (they laughed then I saw two women still selling matemba, I greeted them and they said that sizikuyenda chifukwa anthu akudya masamba akumunda (it is not ok, because people are now eating vegetables from there field) . 3 young girls were selling mangoes, 2 men selling usipa, and other woman selling kanyenya (goat meat) the HB was there with 3 friends then I failed to talk to her. 3 men were selling second hand cloths. People were coming at the market especially buying mangoes and sugarcane for a certain young girl. I moved around almost 40 minutes but only few customers buying. Most of them were just moving around.

At 4.20 I started my journey back home. at 5.30 g.son of GVH came to chat then he started saying that I gave [Bicycle maker] my bicycle to repair but he failed because at that time he was taking loan at Madef and he had a machine for making shoes buy he was not paying back the loan. Then people from Madef came to take his machine, that’s why he stopped making shoes. He know how to make bicycles, shoes, but the problem is that he is lazy some times he used to cheat the customers that mubwele mawa mudzatenge njinga, nsapato zanu ( come tomorrow to collect your bicycle, and your shoes) while no. then nowadays most of the people stopped going there to repair their bicycles. At 6.05 pm he left and he said that I will come later.

At 6.30 I receive a call from Mangochi mission they told me that 1 of the Italian sisters has died but the burial will take place in Italy and dead body will depart on Monday no Italian sister now everybody died. And they just encouraged me to work hard in everything & pray for those Italian sisters who died some years ago. And the one who died on 30th January 2009. Because they are the one’s who gave me the name Gertrude and my elder sister’s name & they were taking care of our family. Then I accepted and promised that every Wednesday I will be raying for them. At 8 grandson of I Mudzi B came to sleep

31 January 2009

In the morning when I waked up I saw 3 g dottas of GVH weeding in cotton field. Then Sofia
came to greet me and she started saying that HB of Esnart was complaining that Esnart is rude after waking up in the morning she don't know how the clean at the bedroom and she don't know how to cook nice food. After asking her why she is not cleaning at the bedroom she used to answer that ndatopa (I am tired) all the time but in the field I hired ganyu she is just staying and since I came on 24\textsuperscript{th} December up to now 31\textsuperscript{st} January its now 4 times fighting and its good for me to marry another wife who will be listening to my words, who knows how to clean in the house, cooking, not rude like this when I will be back to S.A I will send some money for her to build her own house and it will be the end of the marriage. Comment from Sofia: Those women who don’t know how to take care of the HB have got marriages but those women who knows how to take care of the HB we don’t have marriages.

On the way to church I saw Auleria selling zigumu at [small crossroads market] at the church they forced me to preach and I preached mark 4 v 1 - 24 and everybody was happy on the way back I met with dotta of Venesi Tenge and she told me that ndikugulitsa zigumu za (I am selling maize) Grace and Ada was also selling zigumu for her mother.

After lunch at 2:40 Sofia, Pamela and Evelin came to chart and Sofia said that Livia has hired ganyu in her cotton field almost 150mk weeding (and indeed I saw 2 young boys weeding) others were making ridges for potatoes (250mk) all the women laughed but I don’t why. Sofia continued by saying that I saw Chenawe with full basket of msewula from her field and she was telling zione that: amuna anga agula nsoma za 100mk (my HB bought some fish for 100mk). Then I saw Doris passing by with an acertain boy (looked big than her) then ana laughed and said that chibwenzi cha Doris koma ali std 6 zimuthandiza (is it going to help her, having boyfriends while still in school?) Sofia answered that mwina akufuna kukwatira (that one is the boyfriend of Doris but imagine she is in std 6, is it going to help her?) we all laughed. Blessings came she started telling me that my HB sent 8 pieces of zitenje and 13 blankets for sale. And I am selling 1 chitenje for 800mk (in Lilongwe its 500mk the chitenje that Blessings sells) but the blankets I will ask my HB about the price but may be 9,000 per blankets [J: in Lilongwe about 2000mk says G, but in villages people don't know this] and people will paying in cotton season when she left ana said that the problem of people in this vg is that. They used to take a lot of things now! Then after selling cotton they remain empty handed. then GVH came to borrow my bicycle she said that ndikupita kwambera kukagula chimanga (I am going to [nearest tradingcenter] to buy some maize) then when coming back I saw her with 50kgs or maize.

Then I heard Livia telling Hamra that ndagulitsa 100mk [tomatoes bought in Balaka] lero (today) and her mother was also making zigumu. Livia continued that masana tadya phala tilibe ufa wokwanila (we ate porridge for lunch because we don't have enough maize flour). Ndalama za amayi (MASAF) abwezera kwa anyiaye [give back money to its owner = Phingi had to pay back some loans with the money she received from MASAF] (the money that was supposed to be given to my mother has been given to the owner). At 7:50pm G. Son of GVH came to sleep (bringing always 2 pieces of zitenje)

In the morning when I waked up I saw Sofia weeding in her field then HB of GVH was also weeding alone in her field. Later on I saw chief Mudzi B coming back from the field. At 10:20 Sofia told me that chief Mudzi A is ill (stomach) then I went there to see him with Sofia when I graeted him he started saying that ndinapita kwa sing'anga kukatenga mankhwala ndiye anandiuza kuti munthu wina wandilodiza (I went to the traditional doctor to take some medicine and they told me that someone has bewitched me). I asked him if he went to the hospital then his wife answered that in the past he went at [nearest tradingcenter] hospital and he was told to go at Balaka hospital. But instead of going to Balaka he went to the Traditional Doctor and payed 500mk but he is still not getting better. As of now he teared off the page where the doctor wrote about the medicine that he will receive at Balaka and he also went at [nearest tradingcenter] for the second time. Then the doctor told him to go at Balaka. When he reached home he also teared
off the page and went to the Traditional Doctor and he has paid 100mk + 1 chicken I asked chief Mudzi A why he don’t want to go at Balaka! Then he answered that ndipita mawa (will go tomorrow). We continued that anthu am’mudzi muno amandida [hate me] sakufuna kuti ndikhale mfumu yawo (people of my vg don’t want me to be their chief) (he didn’t mention them)

1333

At 11:40 I went back home then after lunch Sofia came and she told me that kuli mnsonkhano kwa gulupu 2:30 masana (we have a meeting at 2:30 pm) and I answered that chabwino ndipita at 2 (ok I will go at 2) she came and we went together then on the way she started saying that when we received money for MASAF Jasmine bought 5kgs of maize and today she told me that “ndilibe ufa” (I don’t have maize flour). Amaphika nsima yambiri komanso phala lambiri m’malot azidzya pang’ono basi, ndiye ine sindinawapatse. (They always cook a lot of nsima and a lot of porridge, instead of eating just a little, so I didn’t give them)

1334

Instead of 2.30 the meeting started a 4.10 only few men but a lot of women gathered from the 7 villages of group Mudzi B. then GVH started saying that ndakuitanani kuti tisankhe (I have invited you so that we should select a chairman) chairman wa VDC [Village Development Committee] (people clapped hands) then she asked everybody to mention the name that he/she want and some people raised up their hands and chased Mr Dauda and Mr Wilo every body was happy. Afer that GVH said that a headmaster a kwa [small crossroads market] and [nearest primary school] akuti akudandaula chifukwa ana athu akaweruka kusukulu akumakhala awiri awiri michimanga makamaka atsikana 13 - 15 years (was complaining that when children knock off from school they always walk in pairs, in maize field especially girls Of 13 – 15 years) ndiye akuti (so they said that) every family must tell his /her kids that kuli edzi komanso mibza zosayembekezera [unplanned/unexpected pregnancies], kuchipatala ma ARV ndiwochepa (there is AIDS and unwanted pregnancies and there are not enough ARVs at hospitals). Koma chonde azimayi tidzisesa ku toile (we must sweep the toilet) kuli matenda a cholera (and we should also remember to clean our toilets to avoid cholera) (some people clapped hands). [Had meeting at [nearest primary school] and all chiefs were told to inform their people about this.] The chief of K. village said that nowadays most of the women have got problems in the family if there is a dotta and the father is telling her that usapange izi ndi zoyipa (don’t do this because it is bad) her mother used to say that kodii inu amuna anga mwanyu walakwa chani? mukufuna mudzigonaya naye? (my HB, what is wrong with my dota? do you want to start sleeping with her?) even neighbours they like saying the same words [when a father tries to advise his daughter, others may think that he wants to sleep with her, yet we fathers should continue to advise our daughters]. Tiyeni tiwauze kuti munayu na akufuna ndiyo mukufuna mibza kapena matenda (let us tell our children, that if you sleep with a man you will get pregnant or AIDS) people claped hands. Then the women were discussing that they will start eating maize on 10-15 February. At 5.20 we all departed.

1335

2nd February

1340

When waked up in the morning went to fetch some water then near the bore hole I met with mother of Dorica going at [nearest tradingcenter] to sell tomatoes full bucket, she greeted me and said that ndilibe mwamuna koma ndayamba kugulitsa tomatoe wakumunda kwanga (I don’t have a HB but I am selling some tomatoes from my field), (she smiled) then I saw chief Mudzi B weeding with her son.

1341

Then Rosemary was passing by with Emra, then Emra started saying that people were saying that i will not have enough food to eat this hunger season but am drinking tea every morning and nsima every lunch and every dinner (no-one answered). On the way back I met with Sofia and she started telling me that your friend Innocent wants to start a business of selling kanyenya she has gone to buy the ingredients. After few minutes we saw Innocent coming back and she said that I decided to buy 1ky of maize in order to eat nsima but not ingredients for kanyenya, I will not manage.

1342

At 9.10 I saw Evelin coming back from the maize mill with 5 kgs of maize. And Sofia was going to the maize mill with 8kgs of maize on the way back Sofia passed by and she started laughing and said that wamuona chibwenzi cha Venesi Komatu mwamunayo panopa akumwa ma ARV [J: Sofia says she knows him well, also told Gertrude that he is married] kaya mwina Venesi akufuna ndalama (have you seen the boyfriend of Venesi? but that man is taking ARVs, any way may be Venesi wants some money) (He passed by at 10.40) but Sofia continued that amachoka madzulo kubwelera kwao. Venesi anayamba kubeleka ali
ndi zaka 15 komanso Grace ali ndi ana atatu awiri ali kwa Bambo awo. Banja linatha chifukwa m’ene mwamuna amabera kuchoka ku Zomba anamupeza Grace ali ndi mwamunan. (he goes back to his house in the evening, Venesi started bearing children when she was 15yrs, and Grace has 3 children, 2 of them are staying with their father, they divorced because when her HB come back from Zomba, he found that Grace with another man)

At 11.40 Livia passed by and she started telling Esnart: Njala ndadya nsima mam’mawa masana kulibe ufa. Amayi apita ku balaka kukagula chimanga (am feeling hungry, I ate nsima in the morning, I don’t have maize flour for lunch, my mother has gone to Balaka to buy maize). Then Sofia came to beg masamba (vegetables) from our garden.

At lunch I cooked Pumpkin from our garden and I also gave the old woman (Eveles) 2 pumpkins and she was very happy. Then I saw Thokozani selling small sugarcanes and Grace was passing by the she started saying that Thokozani wayamba geni ya mzimbe anapita ku Liwawadzi (Thokozani has started selling sugar cane she bought at Liwawadzi).

At 05.25 pm I saw boyfriend of Venesi going back to [small crossroads market] since 9.10am at 8.10pm g.son of GVH came to sleep.

Early in the morning at 1.45 we heard people screaming wakuba (a thief) when we listened it I indeed heard some footsteps at midnight and I didn’t switch off my torch. At 4.55am I went to ask what happened and she explained that. The thief entered in the house through a window and took a sewing machine but I slept in the bedroom while Ellesi slept at the sitting room where I left a sewing machine and a bicycle but at that window I left a bucket full of water and when he was going out abasket that I left on top of the roof felled down and we heard a noise that’s when we started screaming.

The Rosemary passed by saying my son in-law is at Ch. village he is not the one who came to steal people became angry because of that words and went to the chief to explain what she was saying because last night people met with him going out of the house of Emra then the chiefs told Rosemary that we didn’t know that Ndaba is a chief but you are the one who explained to us and if it is like that we will also chase you from this village.

At the same time I went to fetch some water then at the borehole some women started complaining that HB of Chikondi has also started stealing some people met with him midnight at acertain in maize field with his friend and we need to ake care. The women continued that Ronan (HB of Esnart) said that he has money we can go and borrow but we will pay back the maize soon after harvesting a 500mk ½ bag 25kgs 1000/50kgs.

On the way back I saw Sofia weeding alone in the field and he of GVH was also weeding in cotton field. At 11.34 I saw Elube carried 25kg of maize and she started telling me that ndikuchokera kwa ADMARC ku Balaka ndinapita dzulo koma chimanga kulibe ndiye ndagula kea ma vendor 70kg komanso Livia ndi amayi ake ali komweko (I am coming back from Balaka ADMARC I went yesterday but there is no maize, then I just bought from vendors, 70kg, but Livia and her mother are still there).

After lunch Venesi, Evelin, Sofia came to chat then they started saying that Elube has already started eating the maize from her field then Venesi said that. Ine ndiyamba week yamawa (will start next week). Evelin laughed and said that HB of Amila came to apologis but Amila refused to forgive him and he went back where he is staying. later on I saw Jasmine and Innocent coming back from Balaka and Venesi started saying that its good to buy maize from venders 75kg at [nearest tradingcenter] than going to Balaka because on the way you will need food and you will use the same money

Jasmine come back from Balaka empty handed and I heard the HB asking her that why didn’t you
came back the same day? but you spent anight at Balaka and today you have been there up to now 3.20 but coming back without maize and your friends went to buy at J. village others at [nearest tradingcenter] then she answered that sindizapitanso ( I will not go again) . Evelin continued that at K. village people have already started stealing maize on the field. At 4.30 they all departed at 5.20 g. son of GVH came to sleep.

4th February

In the morning when I waked up I saw Sofia going to the field then I went to fetch some water at the bolehole I met with Amila + HB going to the field. I greeted them then HB of Amila started saying that ndikupita kumunda ngakhale banja linatha koma tinadzala limodzi chimanga komanso tidzakoloka limodzi( I am going to work in the field although we divorced, but we planted the maize together, and we will harvest together)Then Amila started saying that I will started the business of selling sugarcane. I will go at Liwawadzi today with Emra and we will sell tomorrow at the grocery. On the way back I saw HB of GVH weeding in his field.

At 8:20 I went also to fetch some water because I was washing my blanket then at the borehole I met with Chisoni and she started saying that pa 11february tipitanso kukayezetsa magazi ndi (on 11th February, we will go for blood testing again, I will go with Lovely and Blessings. I asked her why she decided to go for the second time and she answered mwina amuna anga sakuyenda bwino ku SA ndiye ndibwino ineyo ndidziwe ngati ndili ndi Aids kapena ayi. Iyenso akadzabwera ndidzamuwuza kuti akayezetse. ( maybe my HB in SA is not abstaining, it is good for me to know if I am infected with AIDS or not and when he comes back I will tell him to go for blood testing,) Then I told her that when you will be going I will escort you. On the way back I was with Jasmine and she started saying that I don't know why Innocent and Sofia are just quarrelling may be you Getrude you need to ask them because they are your friends [J: fighting bcoz son of Sofia told his mother that innocent had said they should move back to GVH, while Innocent says she only told him to go fight somewhere else with her daughter] but [Jasmine:] Innocent has started a business of selling Kanyenya at [nearest primary school] --> but only day, also tomatoes at grocery only one day.

At 10:30 I went to make nsinjiro ( groundnut flour)to Phingi then I found Venesi chatting there then she told me that mundibweleke phone ndagula maunits ( borrow me your phone I bought some air time)then I gave her. Then she started saying that ubwera nthawi yanji .  ( what time are you coming?). Then Venesi started explaining to Phingi that akuti sabwera akupita ku maliro agogo ake a mwalira. When Venesi left, Phingi started laughing and said that: mamuona Venesi! sakusangalala akuganiza za mwamuna wake kuti ali ku maliro ( you see, Venesi is not happy she is thinking of her HB who has gone to attend the funeral)(we all laughed)

At 11:30 HB of Amila came and he started saying that ndibweleleta nkhnui mundipatse 50mk ndikagule ma battery a wailesi ( I will bring some firewood so that you can buy batteries for my radio) later on he came with the bundle of firewood as he promised and I gave 40mk and he started saying that ndikukhala kwathu [his home vlg] panopa ndikudikira akazi anga apita ku kaoda mizimbe ku Liwawadzi akabwera ine ndidzipita kwathu.. ( I am staying at home, as of now I am waiting for my wife, she has gone to buy some sugarcane at Liwawadzi for sell, when she comes back I will be going back home)

Then Sofia, Ellesi, Pamela came to knit and Innocent passed by with out greeting any one else as usual then Pamela said that she is angry because we are still coming here to knit. The Jasmine came, then Ellesi told her that mumuwuze Innocent kifete sitikudandaula ngakhale sanatipatse moni koma sitisiya kubwera kuti kubwera ( tell Innocent that we are not worried although she stopped greeting us , but we will not stop coming there,) at 3 I cooked 2 maize from our field because I saw 2 maize cob missing. When I moved around I found it at a cerain ridge in the same field then Ellesi said that they want to steal but they failed. Sofia begged nkhwani ( pumpkin leaves) then I gave her they departed earlier because there was heavy wind but no rainfall. Then Thokozani went for the third time to buy sugarcane for sell. At 8.10 g.son of GVH came to sleep.

5th February.

In the morning when I waked u I saw HB of GVH weeding in his cotton field later on I went to fetch some water then I met with 2 women carried maize from their field inorder to cook when I reached home I found Trinity g.dotta of Jasmine at home and she told me that Innocent sent me to
give you this letter then I received if after reading Trinity said that you need to reply right now! then I said: that just tell her to come when she will have time. [Letter said that she will come to chat, had not been coming bcoz she was angry with Sofia, sorry...

Then one of the Health survey passed by and he greeted me and said that I would like to give the women this chloride, so that they should be adding in drinking water to avoid cholera. But although I am doing this most of the women they don’t use, they just drink unsafe water it is difficult for them to understand how chloride is important. Then he continued that I sent Suset to tell the women to gather at one place and Suset told Innocent only, but Innocent didn’t tell anyone even her in-law Sofia. (people gathered and received) When they were coming back I called Innocent and she came then I started telling her that: It is not good to be angry with your in-law you need to call her and apologise for what you did (because Sofia complained to me that Innocent + her mother are just being angry with her but she don’t know why)

After few minutes I saw Sofia passing by (crying ) I asked her with GVH what was wrong but she just answered that inuyo amayi ndi amene mumafuma kuti ndidzikhala kumeneko koma alyense akundikwirisa (you are the one who want me to be staying there, but everybody is angry with me) . GVH went there to ask Jasmine what was wrong ( I don’t know what she answered) but I just saw GVH coming back. Then she started telling me that HB of Sofia is very lazy since he got married to Sofia he has never worked in the field. As of now they divorced and a child is ill but no single Tambala [cent] to help Sofia. That’s why I told Sofia to be staying there with the aim that they will be helping her with food. because Sofia gave birth to 5 children but 1 died and I have been helping Sofia since she was 5 years old and even her children this is not good (said GVH)

Then GVH continued by saying that I have started eating today my maize. GVH continued: Jasmine has got dimba but I don’t know why she is not planting rice like what others are doing even in her field the HB is the one who is working very hard.

At 02;30 I prepared my journey to go at the Grocery and [small crossroads market] (market day) Then I failed because Tinenenji, Esnort and Pamela came to knit as we were chatting Esnart started asking Tinenenji that: kodikou ako anabwera kudzakuwona ( did your HB came to see you) then she answered that ayi Esnart continued ndamva kati ukumapita kwawo! ukumapita kukatani kwa mamuna woti wakwatira mkazi wina ( I heard that you started going to his house, what are you doing there, you already heard that he is married to wife) . Then she answered that ayi sindikupita koma anthu akunama kati ndikumapita ( no, I stopped going there but people are just saying that i still go there) . I heard you are still going to his place. What are you doing there? He already married another wife. [J: HB already had child with other woman, maybe he went back to her, Gertrude suggests when I comment that he found a new wife quickly. G first thought that they may have divorced because they are not getting children. Tinenenji says she is not going to ex-HB anymore, but Gertrude doesn’t know whether this is true.] Then Esnart went to fetch some water, when coming back she told mary to follow her but I don’t know what they were discussing when she came back Pamela also said the same words that akumapita kuchifukwa banja litatha, anakwatira mkazi wina patatha I week ( I don’t go there because we divorced when we just married for 1 week) (it . (it was difficult for me to ask why they divorces but I will ask later. Then I saw Rashida coming balck from the maize mill 6-7kgs of Ufa. (maize flour)
Later on I saw Levison passing by with his friend, then Pamela started saying that I don’t understand what is happening in the family of Thokozani and Levison. Levison went to Balaka one day, then when coming back he bought rice and he cooked himself without telling the wife to cook for him as usual. Then Thokozani also cooked Nsima for herself. Then Hilda (his mother) gave him some pots, plates and ufa instead of telling her son that zimenezi sizabwino. That means she is happy with what is happening, that’s why Thokozani started the BS of selling mzimbe. Then I saw Florence coming back from the borehole then Levison told Florence that: undipatse madziwo nkasambe (give me some water for a bath) while all the days he was washing his body using the water that was fetched by his wife. Then Florence gave him. Pamela continued that have you seen Getrude what is happening there? Florence has got a HB and if he can see what is happening there! Do you think that he can be happy? [J: first Florence refused, but then Levison just took the from her head. Thokozani was just there too. Pamela meant: If Florence’s HB would have seen that she gave her water to Levison he could have thought that they are in relationship] Then I said no: Levison came home yesterday and he started telling me that: ndapeza mkazi wokongola osati Thokozani (I have found a beautiful woman not Thokozani) (said Pamela). She [Pamela] continued by saying that it is good not to get married now because during cotton season it is not difficult to start a BS because most of the people used to buy. She continued that after harvesting I will no sell my maize like what so many people used to do! Because I would like to go and take my children at Zomba, I will manage to take care of them because I will have enough food to feed them. At 6:20pm she [Pamela] said that: ndikupita ndikaphike nsima chifukwa asisi kulibe (Venesi) apita kumaliro kupitilira kwa [small crossroads market] (I am going to cook some nsima because my mother is not at home, (Venesi) she has gone to attend the funeral beyond [small crossroads market]) (I just guessed that she has followed her boy friend because I heard on the telephone that: sindibwera ndikupita kumaliro) (I will not come because I am going to attend the funeral).

At 7pm Sofia came and she started explaining to me what made her to start crying she took a bottle in order to receive chloride, then her child was just crying then she gave the bottle to a certain girl in order to go and receive chloride for her. When the girl was coming back instead of giving to Sofia the bottle, she gave it to Innocent. Then she told Sofia that I gave your chloride to Innocent while Jasmine was there! Then Sofia answered that: Innocent stopped talking to me, then you have done wrong by giving her my chloride. Then Jasmine became angry because of that words then she started saying that, ngati siukufuna kukhala kuno upite ukakhale komwe ukufuna, ndiwe wa mwano, ndimwiza mwamuna wako, ukumakangana ndi Innocent chifukwa chiyani (if you don’t want to stay here then choose where you want to stay, you are rude, I will tell your HB, why are you just quarrelling with Innocent?) (that’s why I started crying, said Sofia). Then I went to tell the chief in order to go and tell Jasmine to tell her son to build a house for me, and it will be the end of the marriage, because he is not giving me enough money to feed the children. After that she left.

In the morning when I waked up I heard wife of Mr Ntawanga telling her friend that pa 18th February anthropy kudya ufa wachimanga cha m’manda (18th February people will start eating maize flour from there field). Then dotta in-law of GVH from K. village came, and she asked me to teach her how to write a message using a telephone she wanted to send a text to her HB who is in SA. Then I taught her and she was very happy because she managed.
At 10 I went to greet Phingi but I found her coming back from the field with Livia and they carried mseula and maize as we were chatting she started complaining that thieves passed by at night with a big dog but he just runned away because he didn’t find anything in the kitchen. Livia answered that even last year the HB of Nyamwale went steal maize in a certain field and the wife started telling her HB that bwanji simunathawe kuti asakugwireni? (why did you not run away so that they could not catch you?) But instead of taking him to police they just gave a punishment of making ridges in the field of Kima, then the woman who complained that she just have 7 plates started saying that my mother has gone to charge her telephone at [nearest trading center] (but I failed to ask where she got it) Phingi continued that masana sitidya chimanga kulibe ufa Livia apita kwa [nearest trading center] kukagula chimanga 4kgs. (we will not eat nsima at lunch, no maize flour, Livia will go at [nearby trading center] to buy 4kgs of maize)

At 12:30 I started my journey to [nearest trading center] just to check who was selling then I found the same woman who I interviewed. Emily M still be selling maize and the same woman selling beans, nandolo (pigeon peas), g/nuts, mseula inside the market. But the woman who was selling mandasi and masamba (vegetables) were not there. 2 girls selling tomatoes and 1 woman was selling (nkhaka) (curcumber) I greeted her and asked who is the owner of the business and she answered that its mine but I just took from my field inorder to find money for soap, I bought 2 for 20mk. Then I saw a new face selling in a restaurant I waited for almost 30 mins inorder to talk to her but she was busy with customers (4) they wanted nsima. And Kondwani T was still selling in a restaurant, in total they were 5 women. Only few people were at the market selling and few people buying. One young girl was selling zigumu (maize flour cakes) near new restaurant and she said that it was for her mother, she went back home to cook nsima. On the way back at the grocery I found 1 woman Grace whom I interviewed selling eggplants, instead of usipa. And 1 young girl selling tomato.

When I reached home I found Sofia, Tinenenji waiting for me. As we were chatting Livia and Venesi joined us. Then Venesi called me separately she said that ndagula airtime 50 cents ndikufuna ndiyimbe nawo phone (I bought air time 50 cents, I want to make a call) then I gave her. Then on the call they were discussing that Venesi: mwana akudwala mawa ndipita naye ku chipatala kwa [clinic] village. Komanso ndalama zomwe umafunsa kubwereka ndapeza 2000mk kwa wina wake (my child is sick then I will go at the hospital tomorrow and I found the 2000MK that you wanted to borrow). Then he answered that ndibwera mawa (I will come tomorrow) then she left. Tinenenji started laughing and said that: Venesi wants to get married now! But after cotton season they will divorce that is what most of the men used to do [knowing that she will soon have a lot of money from cotton, he may just want to eat all that money and then leave].

Sofia was happy because she managed to make some shoes and Tinenenji learned how to make decorations.

All the women left because there was heavy wind and Innocent joined me. Then she started saying that Elube and my mother [=Jasmine] have gone to Balaka Admarc to buy maize. They will be back tomorrow. Then I had a chance of asking her [Innocent] how it is going on with the one who wants to marry her.(via friend of Jasmine). Then she answered that
mwamunayo anapita kwa a chimwene anga kwa J. village village kukawafotokozeru kuti akufuna andikwatire mwezi wa mawa, koma ineyo ndaganiza kuti ndisakwatiwe chifukwa mwana wanga ndi wamung’ono komanso mwamunayo sindinamukonde chifukwa ndiwosaoneka bwino komanso ndili ndi chibwenzi china kufupi ndi ku Balaka (the man went to meet my brother at j. village, to tell him that he wants to marry me by next month, but I have decided not to get married because my child is still young, and apart from that I don’t like the man becoz he is not handsome, and because I also have another boyfriend near Balaka). After few minutes her father called her. At 6:55pm Livia came and she started saying that ndagula 50cent 80mk ndikufuna ndiyimbe nawo phone, (I bought 50 cent at 80mk I want to make a call.), then I gave her. Then I heard Livia saying that, mawa sindibwera ndibwera lolemba (tomorrow I will not come but will come on Monday). Then he accepted (the one who proposed to her on from [nearest tradingcenter], who gave her clothes on Feb 11). And Livia told me that ndimawanamiza amayi kuti ndikupita ku Balaka kukasoka (I cheated my mother that I am going for tailoring) (to tailor). At 7:15 she left.

7 February

In the morning when I waked up, I saw HB of GVH weeding in cotton field with his g.son. later on I went to fetch some water at the borehole, then I found Esnart washing 5 blankets and she was telling her friend that: kunyumba ndasiya mablanket 3, ndichapa mawa. (I have left 3 blankets at home and I will wash tomorrow). Still at the borehole I met with Naima, only then she was discussing with her friend (friend said that she wants to marry again now that the HB left her and she is failing to take care of her children alone) that if I will divorce with my HB I will not accept to get married to another man because it will be a big problem for the new HB to take care of my children (they all laughed). The other woman answered that: in our village there is a certain woman who gave birth in 2007 Dec and another child 2008 Dec when her HB advised her to go to the hospital to take some pills she refused and now the HB has gone to marry another wife. Esnart answered that the main problem is that a lot of women think that most of the HB likes sex, that’s why most of the men used to have 2-3 wives then they think of giving birth often (we all laughed at the borehole).

At 9:40 Suset passed by, she was coming back from the maizemill, she greeted me and said that: I would like to buy some shoes for my dotta then I charged her 40mk. Then she continued that: I went to the maizemill I just bought 5kgs at J. village 75/kg. then Sofia joined us then Suset said that I will not give birth to another child because I will not manage to take care of them, my HB used to come just to eat nsima and going back but not buying food or soap for me. When Suset left Sofia started saying that the man who wanted to get married to Innocent went to explain the issue at J. village to the elder brother of Innocent but the brother of Innocent refused because the man likes women. And Innocent also accepted not to get married to that man. Sofia continued that Mr Chikombo came this morning to apply chemicals in his cotton field then he asked Livia to help him and as of now they are together in the cotton field (Sofia laughed). Komatu kunja kuno (here in the world) kuli matenda koma Livia ali ndi zibwenzi zambiri. Sakuwopa (we have diseases in this world, but Livia has a lot of boyfriends, she is not afraid), when we went to [nearest tradingcenter] she was with boyfriend, when we went to [small crossroads market] was with another, she is not afraid... Her child started crying then she said that: ndapita ndikaphike nsima mwana akulira ndi njala (I am going to cook some nsima, my child is crying with hunger). Then she left. Later on I saw Ada.
At 12:30 GVH came to greet me then she started saying that am very busy planting rice because last year I harvested almost 10 bags and this year I wish it will be more than that. After lunch I saw new HB of Venesi passing by [J: Gertrude call him HB now!] then at 2 Sofia, Livia and Innocent joined me knitting. Sofia started saying that Lovely was saying that when her HB went to SA she went to a traditional doctor to take some medicine so that he could not propose another wife there. When he came back here, he went to somewhere else to meet with his girlfriend but when he came back home at night he started saying that: ndagona ndi mkazi wina koma sindidzachitanso undikhululukire (I have slept with another woman, but forgive me, I will not do it again) (because of the Traditional medicine that she used). Livia said that I think I will go and meet with that Traditional doctor to take some medicine (we all laughed). The g.Dot of Jasmine came then she started telling that: we have failed to buy maize at Admarc, only vendors were buying. The one who was selling maize told everybody who wanted to buy that: we don’t have maize here, but later on we saw a car coming at night with 3 men and they bought a lot of maize, and in the morning we went to buy to vendors at 75mk/kg (10kgs) and Innocent answered that I gave my mother 500mk to buy maize and my father also contributed 1000mk. G.Dotta continued telling Sofia that you don’t want to tell your HB that you don’t have enough food and your HB said that he don’t have money, then he borrowed 500mk to Jasmine and we have bought 6kgs for you. But your HB said that he will send 500mk for you to buy food but after that he will not be sending anything because you will be eating what you have planted in your field. Sofia was angry and answered that he didn’t help me working in the field and I have got 4 children for him then where am I going to get money for soap? Sofia cried. Later on I saw chief Mudzi B passing by with full basin of maize from her field. Then Tinenenji joined us and she started saying that 5 women have gathered at the old woman’s kitchen, they are cooking maize to eat, they want to eat together because it is their first day to eat what they planted and they are very happy (my aim was to go and see but I failed, because to leave the women knitting without me. Then a certain woman came from Nd. village to buy shoes and chipewa (hat) I charged her 120mk. All the women departed at 6:10pm.

8 February 2009

In the morning when I waked up I saw Sofia going to the field then when she was coming back, she came to greet me, and and I asked her if HB of Esnart has gone to SA then she answered that he has gone to Zomba to another wife, he just cheated Esnart that I am going to sell these blankets, bed, and video set so that I can find money for transport going back to Zomba. Sofia continued that as of now they have divorced because Esnart is still not respecting the HB, she used to say that I am tired all the time, after telling her to clean at the bedroom. And he said that he will just send some money for her to build her house in her village, because of the way she is behaving it seems that she don’t want marriage.

Then later on I saw a certain man passing by and asked Sofia about the wife of that man because I saw him one day planting cotton with Malita. Then Sofia answered that he is
the new HB of Malita and he is working somewhere else at [small crossroads market] at night as a security guard. At 9:30 I went to fetch some water at the borehole then I saw a dotta of chief Mudzi B carried 2kgs of ufa and Ada said that: ndatopa ndikuchokera kmununda, ndikupalira thonje, ndimaliza after 2 days. (I am tired, I am coming back from the field, I am weeding cotton, I will finish after 2 days). Then Innocent came to chat, and I asked her why Tinenenji divorced and she answered that one night her HB told her that I am going somewhere else to take some money! But I will not be back today because it is very far, I will be back tomorrow morning. (not knowing that he was cheating her) Later on midnight her HB came back and knocked at the door then he found Tinenenji with HB of Fatima at the bedroom and HB of Tinenenji said that zikomo kwambiri, banja latha. (thanks a lot, our marriage is over).

Innocent continued as of now Tinenenji stopped talking to me because she heard that I was in relationship with HB of Fatima. As of now Fatima sent a message that she will never come back because her HB is also in relationship with Dorica, and mother of Dorica is not happy because she is thinking that may be Dorica will be pregnant and stop school.

Phingi came also to greet me and she started saying that mother of Jane is not happy because her dotta went to get married very far in town. Instead of getting married to a man who stays in a village so that they can be helping one another working in the field. Later on I saw Levison passing with a pumpkin then wife of chief Mudzi A also passed by with more than 15 maize from her field. Then wife of chief Mudzi A came to greet me, then she started saying that ndikuchokera kuganyu! Ndimaliza lero, ndimalima mizere ya mbatata kwina kwake 1500Mk (I am coming back from casual labour, I will finish today, I was making some ridges for sweet potatoes somewhere, for 1500Mk). Then she continued her journey to borehole. At 11:05 I saw Chisoni passing by with maize more than 10 from her field and she greeted me and said that ndasangalala chifukwa ndayamba kudya chimanga cha kumunda kwanga. (I am happy becoz I have started eating maize from my field.).

Innocent started saying that I have got malaria then I am going back home then I told her that why cannt you go and test your blood at [clinic] village hospital, then she started saying that I went for blood testing before I gave birth to child! But when I got married to the second HB the owner of the child, up to now! I didn’t go for blood testing. Ndkuchita mantha chifukwa kuti akandipeze ndi kachilombo nditha kumwa poison. (I am afraid because if I they will find me with the virus, I will take poison) Then I told her that if you will found positive that means you will be going to the hospital for ARVs. Then she answered that sindingakwanitse kupita ndekha! (I cannot manage to go alone) Then I told her that that problem I will escort you. Then at 11:20 she said that ndikupita kukaphika nsima (I am going to cook some maize) but at home a friend of my mother came to make zigumu and she came with 5 children and including 5 of our family! That means I will cook nsima for 10 people like in the morning I also cooked porridge for 10 people. Then Sofia passed by with matemba (dry fish) in her hands and she said that bought for 20Mk only because I am very tired eating masamba (vegetables) everyday. Lovely passed by with 10 maize from her field then she gave me 2maize. Then Sofia came and she gave me 3 egg plants.

9 February

In the morning when I waked up I went to fetch some water then I saw Auleria going to sell
some tomatoes full pail at [nearest trading center], she said that ndayamba kugulitsa za ku munda kwanga (I have started selling from my field). Then I saw Fissa going to sell, sugarcane at the grocery. Then Hamra was telling Florence that: ndikupita kwa [small crossroads market] kukagula mankhwala a thonje (I am going at [small crossroads market] to buy pesticides for cotton) K350 per bottle.

10 febr.- 6 march: see P3 Fieldnotes Janneke

At 9:30 I went to Evelin to check what she was writing then I found her eating maungu (pumpkins). After greeting me I asked her to show me what she was writing then I just reminded her what we already explained. Then on the way back home Molly gave me green maize 2. Then I asked her about the old woman who is staying in the house of Auleria + her mother. Then she said that she is related to mother of Auleria, as of now she is staying there because her marriage ended. Grace continued that she is the same as Rosemary she likes sex then the HB used to run away. As of now she is very old but soon after divorcing she used to go and marry another HB. After that Grace started saying that soon after harvesting I will start buying maize then I asked her where she will found the money and she said that: panopa sindikudziwa koma kuti ndipeza.. (as of now I don’t know where I will find it) After that I went back home.

At lunch Ellesi came to greet me then I asked her about Dorica then she said that: I saw the boy going to her mother they were meeting there, but as of now he stopped going there and I don’t know whether Dorica agreed about marriage or not. Then I saw Sofia crying when I asked her she said that ndikudwala malungo, komanso mwana wanga malungo.(I am suffering from malaria, and my child is also suffering from malaria). Then a lot of women from Mudzi B went to watch a netball and football match at [nearest primary school].

At 3:15 a certain woman, Wisikesi (dotta-in-law of GVH) came and asked me to braid her hair, then Kondwani, Evelin, Tumanene, Esnart joined me, and they started saying that: Joyce Banda came for campaign and a lot of people went there but the only problem was that most of the boys were fighting.

And Kondwani said that: do you remember Evelin that you were very fat with long hair when you were staying with the HB? Then Evelin answered that zimachitika (it happens): then Evelin said that ndikupita ku grocery ndagula nsalu ndikufuna ndikasoketse uniform ya mwana (I am going to the grocery, I bought a piece of cloth, then I want to make a school uniform for my child,). Then Kondwani said that mukandigulire matemba a (buy some dry fish for me for) 30mk.

Then Evelin told Wisikesi that “I want to flash someone else.” Then when she flashed, a certain man called her, then Evelin answered that ndikudwala, chifuwa (I am suffering from coughing) and he said that ndilibe, ma units (no air time). Then the women started laughing and shaked hands. At 4:20 Evelin, Tumanene and dotta of Mudzi B left. Then Kondwani said that ndikupita kukamuona (I am going to see her) Sofia.
akudwala. Then I was knitting with Esnart. And I asked her that zikuyenda ndi amuna anu? (how are you doing with your HB?) And she answered that zikuyenda panopa akuti atumiza ndalama kuti ndigule chimanga chambiri anthu akamakolola (everything is fine, he said that he will send some money so that I should buy some a lot of maize soon after harvesting) and I asked her about the fighting and she said that: tinakambirana (problems are over now) zinatha (we discussed, problems are over now). Then her child started crying saying that tiyeni kunyumba (let's go home) then she left.

1422

8 March

When I waked up in the morning I started washing my clothes. Then Livia came to greet me and she said that: ndikupita kumunda kwanga kukatenga chimanga, ufa watha. (I am going to my field to take some maize because my maize flour got finished). After washing cloths I went to fetch some water from there I went to wash my body. At 7:40 I had my breakfast g/nuts tea. At 11:10 I went to greet Sofia because she was still not getting better then I found GVH, chief Mudzi B, Chisoni, chief Mudzi A chatting with Sofia and chief Mudzi B was complaining because Innocent being her in-law didn’t go to fetch some water for Sofia to wash her body or sweeping in her house, even making porridge. Then GVH sent her g.daughter to fetch some water for Sofia and dotta of chief Mudzi B started making porridge for Sofia. Chief Mudzi A, GVH were complaining that they are not getting better.

1423

After lunch Esnart came to knit and HB of Elube passed by and Esnart said that bola amuna awo akugwira ntchito (at least her HB is working) and I asked how much money does he receive and she said 5000mk. Then Livia was going to fetch some water and Esnart said that Livia came with a cellphone on Wednesday for me to charge for her and she said that her ex-HB at [nearest tradingcenter] gave her and I asked her about her boyfriend at K. (but he is married) and she answered that zikuyenda (it is going OK). Esnart continued that Livia ndi hule amalola mwamuna aliyense, mwamuna woyamba (Livia is a prostitute, she just accepts any man, the first HB is) father of Joy they divorced because he wanted to kill the child then she married a second HB at Balaka but she just stayed for few months but divorced because when the HB gave her some money to buy maize, relish, cooking oil, lotion and salt, she was just buying oil at K10, salt 10MK and matemba (dry fish) but instead of buying maize she was just moving around to neighbours begging ufa sometime borrowing ufa not buying but the money for maize she was just buying biscuits, mandasi and the HB was angry and divorced, after that she married a boy from [nearest tradingcenter] and divorced as of now she is in relationship with a man from K. but married. In std 5 (Livia) but she already started zibwenzi (boyfriends) at that time. But I started relationship with Ronan when I was in std 6, when I was going to school I found him on the road waiting for me, and she started proposing me at that time he was staying in Zomba but he came to see his parents. When I went back to Zomba to continue school, he was writing letters and sending pictures to me. later on he sent zitenje 2 and I was happy. After few months I stopped school and got married. As of now he [HB] told me [Esnart] that he will build a house at home next year, he want to buy a lot of maize to put cement on the floor buying doors for the bedrooms.

1424

Then Konwani and Rosa joined us, then we saw a certain man passing by on the bike and
Kondwani said that: that one is the HB of Jane he is looking for her because since the day of the funeral she didn’t go back to Balaka but she is staying somewhere else at [clinic] village. I think this man loved Jane that’s why he is trying to find out where she is, said Esnart.

Later on, I asked Rosa about her cotton field then she answered that ndimalima ndekha (I work alone in the field) no-one else helped me but I don’t know how much money am going to have but I will not pay school fees because my sister who is staying at Ntcheu is the one who is paying for me. but I will see what to use that money after selling, but as of now I don’t know.

Kondwani, Rosa departed and Vanessa joined. Then I asked them about Tinenenji and HB of Fatima, then they said that mwina akufuna akwatirane chifukwa anthu amati Tinenenji ali ndi mamba ya mwamuna wa Fatima. (maybe they want to marry each other, because people are saying that Tinenenji is pregnant from the HB of Fatima) They all left at 5.45pm.

1430  March 16, Monday

Elube passed by with a new chitini (a bucket) to borehole.

1431  March 18 Wednesday

When coming back from Balaka, Jeneti came to take her pictures, she came with Sofia & Elube. Then Jeneti started telling me that: ndikuchokera ku maliro (I am coming back from the funeral) & Elube continued when the dead body was coming I saw the owner of the child, she carried a bag for her cloths, combed her hair nicely and her fingers were painted with red colour, she came with Charity, even Charity painted her fingers, they are friends. But the problem is that she was not going to church, therefore she went to the sheik of the mosque in Mudzi B (to find people to pray for the deceased) as if she was a muslim but he refused she also went to C.C.A.P and African continent but they all said that: “we don’t know you”. Then Elube and Jeneti left. And Sofia continued that: its good to be working hard in the field than moving around. Then I asked her if Jeneti is pregnant but Sofia answered that no but she is taking ARVs that’s why she seem to be pregnant. After these words she left.

Early in the morning there was rainfall but some men were working at the graveyard and women were busy cooking. Then around 9am I went to fetch some water then at the borehole I met with Sofia. And on the way back she started telling me that her HB sent beans and cloths for her children (through Innocent) but he told Innocent to tell Sofia that don’t worry he is still remembering you, but Sofia continued that: I received what he sent because I have his children and I cannot manage to take care of them without support from anyone.
Later on Livia came and she started telling me that: last Saturday my boyfriend didn’t come to meet with parents as he promised but he just told me that he didn’t come because he is still getting prepared for marriage, he wants to buy plates and pots. Then I joined Elube when she was going to the funeral, when we reached there I met with Malita and I gave her 1000mk and she said thanks a lot for the help. A lot of women were very busy chatting saying that: the owner of the child was just moving around with different men that’s why her child died. But there was no prayers even a song because she was not going to church said some women. Then the rain started and we went back home because there was no enough place for everybody. When I was at home around 11:30 I just saw few men with the dead body going to the graveyard.

At 1:50 Sofia, Kondwani, Ellesi, Ada came to knit. Kondwani started saying that Esnart is not getting better because of the fighting and she is failing even to go and fetch some water. Then Ada said that: am going back home to make porridge for my dotta.

And Ellesi started laughing and said that Ada you are now busy taking care of your child, does it mean that you didn’t know that if you sleep with a boy without condoms you can get pregnant? Then Kondwani answered that: Ellesi you need to respect Ada because you are not of the same age. Later on Jane came and she started saying that: the one who lost her child was fighting with her ex-HB + a new of her HB at the funeral. They started fighting because a new wife of her HB was saying that: Darling tiyeni kunyumba kunyumba (lets go home darling) after the burial, kodi mukudikira chiyani? (what are you waiting for?) When the owner of the child heard these words she was angry and told her 2 sisters and they started beating her ex-HB + a new wife said Jane.

Jane continued that my g.mother asked that are you going to have a child or not because I have started menstruating but when I got married I misses my periods and its 2 months now, all the women laughed. At 3:40 Livia came and she called me separately and she started saying that I have missed my periods for 2 and half months but I don’t know what is wrong. Then I told her that: if you slept with your boyfriend without any protection that means you are pregnant and Livia said that a-a-a- I didn’t but at the hospital when I went for injection they told me to go back after 3 months but I didn’t. Then Livia left with a sad face. Then Sofia said that aunt Gertrude ndapita tiyeni mundiperekeze (I am going, can you escort me), then I escorted her while Ellesi, Kondwani, Lovely, Grace were still knitting, then Sofia told me that Livia seem to be pregnant because she told me that she has missed her periods for 2 months and she told me that she doesn’t know what to do (we just laughed) and Sofia said to me that ticheza mawa (we will chart tomorrow) then she left. Then I asked Grace about what people used to cook when there is a funeral (where they get food). Then Grace answered that since we harvested from our fields we contributed maize and handolo (pigeon peas), , that’s what we are still using right now. Then Tumanene said that: am going back home because my 2 dottas are ill (malaria). Then Kondwani started saying that: am going to beg some ndiwo (relish)(beans that Sofia had received from HB. Sofia gave full cup of cooked beans for free).
Then Kondwani started saying that when Tumanene’s HB went to SA Ellesi was going to sleep in the house of Tumanene she was told by her uncle. Then Ellesi answered that we started fighting one day then I stopped sleeping there. I asked Ellesi what made them to fight and she answered that ndayiwalu. Then after few minutes Tumanene came back and she wanted me to braid her hair with thread then I told her that go to Evelin to beg thread because she is the one who have that colour. Then Tumanene answered that: Evelin can not give me that thread because she don’t like chatting with friends and Kondwani answered that yes its true she can not give you.

Then Kondwani started saying that only 12 days now to do the last ceremony of the HB of Mudzi B. Sofia came back and she started laughing by telling Tumanene that: please you need to tell your HB in SA to be buying nice cloths for you because he sent some cloths as if they don’t sell nice cloths in SA if not! He must sent some money for you to buy what you want! Because everybody at the borehole was laughing at you. And Tumanene was angry and didn’t answer anything.

20 March Friday

In the morning I went to give some pictures to Chisoni. And I found Jeneti and Fissa chatting then they told me that Chisoni has gone to fetch some water, then I waited for her. And Fissa asked me that where is Janneke then I told her that she is in Lilongwe, how many children does she have then I said she don’t have any. Then Jeneti said how old is she then I said 30. And she continued that, the one who is 30yrs in this village has got 4 children because they didn’t even go to school. Its good for my dotta to continue school and get married later.

Then Chisoni came and I gave her the picture and I saw Amila giving thobwa (gruel) to Fissa, Blessings, Chisoni and me. She told me that she made that thobwa with the maize from her field inorder to help the ceremony after 3 days (death of mother of Auleria). Chisoni said that; I am still suffering from malaria. Then I went back home, on the way I met with Kingsley and he told me that: ndagula (I bought) phone K1.500, I sold my goat yesterday.

Then I saw Sofia going to the hospital with her son. At lunch I saw Evelin coming, she showed me what she was writing and I told her that it is good you can continue and I just reminded her to write what she received from Janneke. Around 2:30pm Sofia + Ada came to knit then Sofia started saying that: on the way to the hospital she met with a certain man and he proposed her by saying that ndikukufunani banja, (I want to marry you), and Sofia said sindikufuna (I don’t want). The man continued that: I have got money I can manage to go with your child at Andiamo hospital and he showed the money to Sofia. Sofia continued that: mwina ali ndi matenda (may be she has a disease) that’s why he showed me the money. Although I don’t have any money but I refused (most men don’t show money at that time, only after accepting relationship).
Then Ada started saying that Levison is just coming home to beg maize for nsima to my mother and my mother is just giving him. But his wife Thokozani is the one who encouraged her HB to grow cotton not maize, as of now they don’t have ufa (maize flour). Ada continued that my ex-HB sent a certain girl to beg some tomatoes but I didn’t give her and I told her to tell him that I worked alone in the field. After that the rain started and Sofia said ndapita ndikukaphika phala la mwana (I am going to make some porridge for my child) and Ada said I am going to play netball. I stayed alone up to dark hours.

21 March Saturday

In the morning there was rainfall from 6:30 then I saw GVH with her 4 grandchildren going to harvest. But they came back after 10 minutes because of heavy rain. Only Tumanene came to show me what she has been knitting but she went back quickly because of the rain. After lunch I was knitting alone no-one else joined me. the rain continued up to 7:30pm. I listened from the radio and they explained that there is a certain wind from South Africa that will bring rain part of Malawi.

22 March Sunday

In the morning when I waked up I saw GVH + 4 grandchildren going to the field and they told me that tikupita kukakolola chimanga (we are going to harvest some maize). Later on I saw mother of chief Mudzi B harvesting maize alone in her field.

At 10 I went to interview Vanessa then on the way I met with chief Mudzi B + her 3 children we greeted each other and she told me that ndikukakolola (I am going to harvest) hybrid maize after that I will start harvesting local maize.

1. Vanessa (Mudzi B)

2. born in 1987 - in Nsanje hospital

3. Blantyre (Lirangwe) 2007 in this village following HB. I followed him because he is from this village - parents told me to follow (lowoka = custom called - wife follows HB after marriage) like what other tribes do following HB. My parents discussed with the parents of my HB that after staying here for some yrs I will go back with him to stay in my village (so from Blantyre moved to Mudzi B why not stayed there? He has field here) and we will not come back here. I asked her when will this happen. Then Vanessa answered that I don’t know.
4. Ngoni - Islam, but at first I was going to C.C.A.P church but now I followed my HB.

5. Tinakumana ku mpira , (we met at foot ball match), it was not the first time to go there to watch football and netball match. He was staying in Blantyre to his mother (elder sister of chief Mudzi B) he proposed me by saying that: ndikukufunani chibwenzi (I want you to be my girl friend) and we stayed almost a month before I accepted, I wanted him to know my parents first to show that he was serious. But at this time he was giving me sopo (soap) - money - lotion but I was not begging. After 5 weeks he went to my parents to explain that we wanted to marry me. then after my relatives and his relatives met where I was staying and discussed about marriage and everybody was happy. We married 2004 at that time I went to stay with him where he was staying. He is a good HB because he provides what I want like buying ndiwo, soap, cloths, lotion.

6. Mudzi B - Yao - Islamic

7. first marriage

8. 2 children 2005 - 2008 all alive. 4 people staying in the family HB + wife + 2 children.

9. Left school std 7 chifukwa cha ulesi (because of laziness).

10. Through ganyu (casual labour) - HB geni selling masamba (vegetables) wife = geni (business) selling potatoes - mzimbe (sugar cane) with the money we buy sopo, salt, lotion, paraffin now HB is working at Liwonde catching fish to men who have boats. I used to do business when I have got money. After doing ganyu, that's when I start BS. We all decided, we discuss together how to use the money that we have. Now I stopped bcoz I don't have money. We also grow cotton for sale since last year.

11. 1 acre HB, given by chief Mudzi B = his young mother. I don't have field. Timalima tonse.

12. Ndimalima cotton, nandolo, tomatoes, mtedza, maize, pumpkin. Last yr harvested 6 bags maize, nandolo 2 basins, didn't grow cotton. 1 basin nandolo sold at 550 mk to vendors (month forgotten).


making bricks.

15. No problem.

16. Finished Nov.

17. 2 blankets, mat, 1 bicycle (received from his uncle in SA, 1 radio (HB decided after ganyu), 1 phone through geni selling masamba, no livestock, no uniform (child still young). House: grassroof.

18. Mitengo, kulima mumsewu. There is a benefit beoz I planted in my field for fertility & firewood.

19. Ndalama...

20. Malungo, chifuwa after a month.

Met with Innocent who said that: my mother is still harvesting with HB, but I will start on Thursday. After lunch went to fetch water, met with Sofia & we saw Dorica passing by, the Sofia told me: Have you heard that HB of Esnart is now proposing Dorica? I said I didn't know. Sofia continued that: I heard this from Lovely, who heard this story from her HB, but Dorica is refusing.

Later on I went to Suset to check HH boekje, found 2 men + 1 woman drinking beer. Her mother started saying: Have you seen these men? One of them came to drink beer and he don't have money to buy and he decided to leave this trousers, a shirt & a jacket (she showed me). When he will have money he will come and take this.

After checking what Suset is writing her mother [Kima] started telling me that I have got a knitting machine, I was using this when I was married, it was my business, my HB had a car but we were able to buy fuel the whole month with the money that I was making through knitting (she showed me the knitting machine) I was learning how to knit in Blantyre and I was taking position 1 everyday. As of now I am failing to knit because I cannot see properly am old. Am just keeping this knitting machine so that Suset can use in future but she seem not to be interested in knitting. And am happy with you Getrude, after repairing this I will tell you to come and learn how to knit using a machine and later on you can just buy it and continue your business. And I said no problem I can come to learn. On the way back I saw HB of Naima making new nkholwe (maize storage) - and Alida was harvesting, still on the way back I met with Aisha carried a plate of nsima and she told me that I want to give this to my HB we have started harvesting and I went back to
cook nsima.

At home Evelin came with her dotta to braid hair. Then she said that all the women are busy watching football match that’s why they are not coming to knit then I said no problem. Later on I saw Suset coming back to fetch some water then she called me and she started saying that: my young mother came and she said that she heard from Chikondi that you employed her and you bought some 2 baby blankets for her. Then she said that go to Getrude to ask for a job when I told my young mother that: I cannot manage, but I knew that it is the same job that I am doing. But just wanted to let you know because you said it must be secret. Then I said no problem just listen to what they will be saying but don’t pay attention.

Then after few minutes Sofia said ndapita ndikukaphika (I am going to cook. Then I stated aline knitting up to dark hours. And GVH came to give me thelere ( okra) , and Eveles sent green maize 4.

23 March Monday

In the morning when I waked up, I started sweeping then I washed plates. After that I saw a lot of women and men from Mudzi B + Mudzi A weeding at the graveyard. Later on I saw some women eg Lovely, Alida, Chenawe, Chisoni, Amila, Jasmine, Phingi carried some nsima and ndiwo (relish) going to the graveyard. At 10 they all finished working and started eating nsima. When coming back Lovely came to greet me and she started saying that every woman from Mudzi B and Mudzi A cooked nsima + ndiwo, nyemba (beans) , chicken, masamba (vegetables) , maungu ( pumpkins) and some thobwa (gruel) and we gathered all the food and shared ½ to men and ½ to women.

People have now started harvesting you will see a lot of ceremonies, my 2 children will go for intiation ceremony. Kondwani + chief Mudzi B’s children will go for initiation, Sofia will go. After that she left, then around 10:30 I went to see what Grace was knitting then Evelin called me and she said that I should check what she is writing if it was still good or not and I told her that everything is ok.

Then I greeted Pamela and she said that mwana akudwala malungo (my child is suffering from malaria) . I found her drying maize, then I went to Molly to buy tomatoes and she started saying that; I have now started selling at Ulongwe, my HB is the one who sells there he goes by bike. And still some women from this village and other villages came to buy. From there I went to Grace then I found her drying maize. As we were chatting she started saying that my HB has started calling me. yesterday I talked with him through the cellphone of Molly and he told me that I should go and start staying there at Mangochi where he is doing the business. But I refused because the other wife is staying there at Mangochi. And when he was staying here, he was not giving me enough money to buy soap, ndiwo ,(relish) , lotion and clothes.
And it's good for me to be staying with my child. I asked her if she will get married again, and she said that yes I will, but not now, indeed to make a right choice not Yao because they like having several wives. And she [Grace] continued by saying that I didn’t work hard in the field because I knew that I will not apply fertilizer because of what my g’mother did.

After that a certain man came selling fish then Grace took hundred kwacha and bought for 40mk her grandmother told her that please buy for me and Grace bought for 20mk for her. Then she started complaining that: she don’t know where I got the money but she is asking me to buy for her. I asked her where she found the money and she answered that kwina kwake (some where else). Then she continued that it’s good for me to continue business either making zigumu (maize flour cakes) or selling mandasi. On the way back home I saw Ada + her mother and HB eating maungu (pumpkins).

After lunch Kondwani and Kingsley came to play bawo and they started saying that most of women want to play netball today, they will not come to knit then I said no problem. Then Kingsley started saying that yesterday Jane borrowed my cellphone she was talking to her boyfriend then Kondwani answered that: have you seen now! Because of that phone since morning we don’t know where she is up to now, 3:00 then Kingsley answered that I will not give her again my cellphone. Kondwani continued why can’t she just go back to her HB not just moving around.

Later on Amila told me to go and fetch some firewood. Her HB told her that he wanted some money for batteries. On the way we met with dottas of Rosemary and they said that we have started harvesting and we will finish on Thursday. Still on the way Amila said that I want to go and sell this firewood at [nearest tradingcenter] because my HB said he wants money to buy batteries then I asked her who is the owner of these trees and she said that it’s mine my parents who died gave these trees to me, and she continued that I will start harvesting on Thursday because I heard that thieves have already started stealing and I want my son and dotta to go for initiation ceremony. She continued that soon after divorcing we will now share the harvest but my HB said that he will not go back where he is coming from he want to continue marriage with me, but I don’t want because I worked hard alone in the field.

Then we saw her HB coming where we were fetching the firewood and he told me that please just take these firewood and give me 50mk for batteries then I said ok. And Amila said that although he wants to buy batteries we don’t have salt, lotion, soap, and paraffin at home. At home I gave Amila 70mk and I saw her giving HB 50mk. After few minutes Kondwani, Lovely, Tumanene, came to knit + Ada, and they started laughing saying that we ate nsima around 10am at the graveyard and Lovely said that we want to play bawo not knitting because it’s already 4:25pm, and I gave them bawo. Lovely continued that I have decided to tell you Getrude that please you need to teach me how to write because I don’t know, I will continue going to adult school but it is difficult for me to understand.
clearly and failing even to ask questions because most of the women used to laugh and chatting. I asked her why she didn’t even finish her primary school and she answered that at that time I was staying with my g.mother and I was just fetching some water for her and when I started std 1 it was very difficult to find school fees. And one time I found a letter on the table that a certain girl wrote to my HB and I just took that letter and runned to Blessings to read for me and she told me that it was his girlfriend, I found another letter and I did the same but Blessings told me that it was from his uncle (we all laughed). And I told her that no problem I can try to teach you. Lovely continued that if in the afternoon my HB went to meet or sleep with his girlfriend at; night: in dreams he used to say everything that he did from morning to evening loudly. Then Kondwani answered that that means you have got some Traditional medicines that you gave him in order to reveal what he has been doing and Lovely said that yes but I cannot tell you where I found that Trad medicine (we all laughed). It was already 5:40 and they all left.

Later on around around 7:10 GVH came and she told me that Sofia went to the hospital with her son at Balaka and she is now admitted there then I wanted to tell you because she did tell you that she is going to the hospital.

24 March Tuesday

In the morning when I waked up I saw chief Mudzi B going to harvest alone, then later on I saw GVH going to harvest with 1 grandson. On the way to the borehole I met with Hilda + her children carried maize on their heads and they told me that we have started harvesting. On the way back I met with Kingsley he greeted me and he said that: up to now Jane is not coming back and we don’t know where she is staying. At 9:40 I saw Tumanene paasing by and she greeted me and said that: ndayamba kukolola .(I have started harvesting). And she gave me a phone number to flash her HB in SA, then she said that I want to beg him some money to buy soap, sugar. And I asked her if all the men from this village who went to SA stay together and she answered that no, but everybody is renting his own house, others near each other (others stay together) but it depends where they are working, others very far.

At 10:28 Lovely came and she told me that today I am going back to my house, I have now finished putting a new roof, and I [Lovely] will now start harvesting this coming Saturday because I have not yet finished maintaining my nkhokwe (maize storage). Kingsley came to greet Lovely and she asked when the HB of Lovely will come back from SA and she answered that: he will come early April (didn’t) and he will not go back to SA he want to start a BS somewhere at Balaka. And Kingsley continued that Phingi came to take 2000mk at home she said that she will pay back 2 bags 50 kgs of maize. Then Lovely asked Kingsley when are you going to see your girlfriend at Kh. village and he answered that: I don’t know Lovely continued when you go there to see her do you go direct where she is staying with her parents or not? Then he answered that: it is difficult to go directly because other parents they think that: that means you want to marry her at that time
(parents will ask when the boy will marry their daughter, so he will not go there until he can answer that question. Now they just meet on the way somewhere or may be at friend’s house to chat. Girls sometimes come to Mudzi B, greeting GVH). But I am not ready to get married now (we all laughed). Then Lovely said that Jeneti is now eating a lot of food (most do not eat nsima in morning, people will say you are misusing ufa (maize flour), sometimes in the morning she cooks nsima, lunch nsima, super nsima, Kingsley laughed and answered that: it’s true I found her one day eating nsima in the morning may be because of ARVs she wants to be eating a lot in order to be very fat. At 11:20 they all left.

At 2pm I saw Elube + Lovely going to adult school. Then Lovely told me to go there and see what they learn. Indeed I followed them, then chief Mudzi B, Grace, Sweetness, Hilda, Kondwani, Fissa, Tinenenji and Vanessa was there then everybody complained that: we are tired because we have started harvesting, and Dorica passed by she was going to the maize mill. Then Sweetness started saying that Dorica is enjoying the bike for her father for the last time. All the women started laughing and Kondwani said that he is now going back on Friday. I heard him talking on the cellphone to his friend saying that I will be there because of the funeral that happened here for my mother-in-law. Lovely said that definitely he will not come back (back to Mangochi). Sweetness said that: may be there is another wife there. Then Venesi said that: it’s good to start our topic for today we should not wait for others because this is 3pm now. Then she started teaching ulimi wa ziweto (animal farming). She was asking some questions to the learners, but others were just laughing shaking hands, looking for some people moving around.

At the end of the lesson chief Mudzi B announced that on Thursday all the women should meet at GVH’s house to help her pounding maize for 40 days ceremony after the death of her HB. After that Jeneti called me to see her sweet potatoes. She told me that: I have started selling at [nearest primary school] school, I want to find 850mk for examination fee of my dotta. Then she told me that she is selling at 20mk (3 p) and 50mk (5 p) per heap. My brother who is in SA promised that he will pay but he didn’t, he is just sending some money only for his wife (who? Other village) and children. I asked her [Jeneti] why she is not making manure and she said that, everybody in this village stopped because it was difficult to carry manure on their head going to apply in the fields and as of now fertilizer is cheaper that’s why everybody is not interested to make manure (more manure then fertilizer. If making at field still have to carry goat dung, water etc to field. Only if they would have wheelbarrel).

On the way back I was with Lovely, Chisoni, Tumanene, Kondwani they said that we want to play bawo although it is already 4:45 pm, then on the way back everybody was complaining that Jeneti used to sell her things at expensive price (selling selling small potatoes for same price as others sell big one. But was first one to plant and thus harvest and thus sell). Kondwani said that at [nearest trading center] you will find that the heap that she is selling at 50mk it’s 20mk. At 5:20 pm we saw GVH coming back from the field since morning. And she stopped and GVH told the women that Sofia is still at the hospital with her
son and those who are willing to go, we can go together tomorrow morning and Kondwani said that I will go with you. The women stopped knitting and they said that we like bawo but not knitting. It was very cold and everybody left.

25 March Wednesday

In the morning I went to fetch some water at the borehole. I found Ada and Kingsley and they were discussing that Emra followed her HB at Ch. village and now thieves have already harvested her maize, still at the borehole I saw Mrs Ntawanga and Rashida coming back from the maizemill. Then chief Mudzi A passed by he greeted me and said that I am going to GVH to give her maize, I have contributed for the ceremony that will be done next week. Then at 9:30 I saw Tumanene and Lovely coming back from the field, they greeted me and said that we are busy harvesting. We want to finish by Saturday.

After that Makuta from B. village (who came to learn how to send a message) came to greet me and she started saying that: my HB sent 4000mk for ndiwo and he said he will come next year. And she continued that the wife of the owner of this house was in relationship with son son of Venesi who went to SA. He was coming to sleep here every night. Then the son of Venesi started saying that: all women whose HB are in SA are now tired staying alone in the house, that’s why a certain woman is just calling me at night. Then Lovely came and she answered that one night he came even at home and told me that he wanted to stay in my house the whole night, but I chased him because he is still young but he is not afraid of elder women (we all laughed).

Lovely continued her journey she said that: I am still harvesting but in the afternoon I will be at adult school then Makuta left. After lunch I started knitting then I saw women going for adult school and no-one else came to knit when Kingsley came to sleep he said that most of the women were busy at adult school, others went at Balaka to see Sofia and her son at the hospital, while other women were busy making thobwa. For those women who will be pounding maize at GVH’s house.

26 March 2009, Thursday.

In the morning after breakfast I went to fetch some water and after that I started knitting, then I saw Kima, Naima carried a plate of maize and they greeted me and said that we are going to help GVH pounding maize for the 40 days ceremony, Mrs Musitafa came and bought a jersey for her dotta at 350mkl.

Later on I saw Livia coming back to help GVH pounding maize. I called her [Livia] inorder to ask if she started menstruating or not but firstly I asked her how the
Then Makuta came to greet me and she started saying that: I am happy because am able to send a massage to my HB [in SA] and he is also happy because he didn’t expect that I can manage. Then Teleza passed by going to the borehole Makuta said that Teleza was in relationship with my HB and I told my HB that: although you are doing this but I have got your 4 children while Teleza has got children but of different HBs then you will have a big responsibility of taking care of all those children and my children here. When I told him these words my HB said that: please forgive me I will not do it again (she laughed).

Around 2 Rashida + Chenawe passed by they greeted me and said that we are going to attend the funeral at [nearest primary school], a certain woman died. Then later on Esnart, Innocent and Kondwani came to play bawo, they said that: we are now tired harvesting that’s why we are not knitting. They were busy with Bawo (no stories) then GVH called me in her field and gave me some g/nuts. Amila came and she called me separately, she said that give me 20mk I want to buy matemba (dry fish), I will give you maize after harvesting. Then I gave her. All the women left and Livia came separately she said that I am selling a 50kg bag of maize at K1200 then I gave her. Then she said that: I have decided to go for check up tomorrow at Andiamo hospital (private hospital at Balaka) then maybe they will need some money there! That’s why I have decided to sell the maize. Anything else I will tell you when I will be back. But there is a certain Trad. doctor at [nearest primary school] who knows some medicine for abortion may be when coming back from Andiamo hospital I will go there because I have already tried Alluvela [aloe vera] full bottle but I failed (she cried) am afraid because my mother will be angry (she left).
In the morning when I woke up, I saw chief Mudzi B, Naima + HB, Tumanene going to harvest their maize. Later on I prepared my journey to [nearest tradingcenter] to give a picture, then on the way I saw Tumanene still harvesting alone and Filimona +HB harvesting. I stopped and greeted Eveles and said that I am not getting better still pain in the body and I like thobwa (gruel) not nsima and I am trying to find some medicine to put in my rice field to protect from thieves I asked my son to go and take for me some where else because I know and he knows the tree but he refused to go he said he is busy. But if I can die today please! Go and harvest all the rice and eat. Then I continued my journey. At the grocery I didn’t find anyone selling, at [nearest tradingcenter] almost 6 women (new faces) selling g/nuts 1 woman tomatoes, all the 4 restaurants were opened, 2 women selling mandasi, 4 women selling dried fish but few men selling cloths. After greeting the business women they said that; at least now people have started buying fish for ndiwo (relish) because they are selling maize and they have got money. On the way back no-one else was at the grocery selling. When I reached home GVH came and give me goat meat she said that; I slaughtered a goat at home and I have decided to share with some friends. Then I said thanks a lot.

After lunch Julia came and she said that I have decided to come and knit today because my HB has gone to sell some fish, then I am free to move around, you know its difficult to be moving around to chat with friends while the HB is nearby! May be he will need some drinking water, even to wash his body. Then she continued that my HB bought some salt and he is exchanging with maize. I very small plate salt and 2 big cups full of maize and a lot of women in Mudzi A and other villages are coming with maize. Later on Esnart joined us and Livia. Everybody was happy saying that: we are now eating pumpkin, either porridge - nsima a lot or leaves for ndiwo than some months ago.

Later on Rosemary passed by and she called me separately and said that: I will come at night to sell some maize because I want to find money for salt and soap. I decided to come in the morning but my ex-HB saw me with maize and he said that don’t go and sell (because may be worked together on maize field. Also after divorce he still went to her when she was ill one day to chat, so he is still concerned about her) here is 50mk for you to buy what you want. After this Julia said that: I am going because my HB is on the way back now. Ada passed by and the women said that have you seen Ada now! She is able to wash her body properly than in the past, then Esnart said that: that’s why her HB wants to come back. But during hunger season everybody was tall and thin Livia laughed and answered that: as of now we are eating nsima full plate we have forgotten. Then we saw Sofia coming back from the hospital (after 5 days) and she said that at least my son is getting better now and she was happy.

All the women left they just stayed almost 45 mins they said that they are busy harvesting and they are tired all the time. Then I decided to go and greet Sofia to ask if the HB was going to see her at the hospital. When I reached there I found Ada + GVH chatting and Ada told me that the women whom you saw at adult school chatting with me is the ex-wife of my brother Levison, she came to pick her dotta back to Lilongwe and she
stayed almost 4 days. I asked her if Levison was going there to chat. And Ada said that: yes! He was coming and they were chatting, but I don’t know what they were discussing. Signs of sleeping together? Were only chatting at Ada’s veranda, ex-wife stayed there with Ada so probably they had no chance, unless Ada gave them the opportunity deliberately by going somewhere else.

Ada left and Sofia started explaining that: at the hospital the doctor said that my son doesn’t have enough blood. And my HB is the one who came and brought some. And he was coming at the hospital three times a day and he bought a new chitenje for me, 3 shirts and 2 shorts for my son, 1 plate and 3 containers and he gave me some money to hire a bike when coming back today. He was also bringing some soft drinks at the hospital. And he said that he will come to see the child after few days. I didn’t ask her a lot of questions because her mother (GVH was there). After that I went back home and Livia followed me, and she said that I failed to go today at the hospital because my father said that today its Friday no tailoring what do you want to do there? Then I cheated him that I want to see Sofia at the hospital but he said don’t worry I will go on the bike. Then I failed. After that she left, then I met with Kondwani at the borehole and she said that its now 4-5 days since Jane left, and her g.mother said that: Jane is a grown up girl she know what she is doing.

28 March Saturday

At night around 9pm Rosemary knocked the door. I went out and greeted her then she said that: I will come midnight and put some maize in the kitchen for sell, I am afraid to bring it right now because my children will see that I have started selling maize then in hunger season that means they will not give me some food. I want to buy some soap and salt that’s why I decided to sell.

Early in the morning when I waked up I found some maize in the kitchen and it was for 90mk because I was using a small plate at 1mk and scale 25mk per kg, Venesi, Innocent, Sofia, Esnart are the ones who told me the price. Later on I went to fetch some water then at the borehole Innocent + GVH and chief Mudzi B + Kondwani were there fetching some water and they were discussing that: at night Jasmine didn’t sleep well her mother who died came in a dream and she told her to send her g.son Davie at Zomba to be staying with mother of Fatima. And apart from that she must prepare some nsima + ndiwo to eat with some people in the village as ceremony. Then Kondwani said that: I don’t understand! Because these dreams used to happen soon after or when people are harvesting (she compared with what happened to Lovely) [J: insinuating that people are cheating about these kind of dreams].
Then at 9:45 am chief Mudzi B came home and she asked me to flash her brother who is staying in SA. I did it and after few minutes her brother called and she started explaining that I want to beg some money for soap and paraffin and some money to contribute during the ceremony of the death of GVH’s HB because we’re related and if something happens to us she is the one who used to help and her brother said I will see, what to do. Then chief Mudzi B said that thanks a lot Getrude for your help. Later on Tumanene also came to flash her HB she said that I want to beg some money. I flashed but her HB didn’t call, Tumanene complained that: its now 2 ½ weeks since he called me and almost 3 months without sending some money for soap and paraffin, even sugar. Then my mother is not getting better I wanted transport to go and see her, but I cannot go there without soap or salt. And its good for me to sell 1 bag of maize and buy what I want. But if I can sell the maize and find some money most of the women who have got HB in SA will ask me where I found the money and they can easily tell my HB that: I have got money (after seeing what I bought). But it will good for him to send some money and I can sell my maize with that money I can go to Balaka and buy soap, salt, paraffin, juice, sugar. I asked her why she is not doing business and she answered that: my HB said that he will stop sending money and it will be the end of marriage because when I will be doing BS that means I will find another man (Tumanene was angry).

After that I went to see Phingi (ill) and I found her relatives and sons gathered discussing about the ceremony (dreams). Then I turned back and told Livia that I will come later.

After lunch I started knitting then GVH sent a message to dotta of Sofia to tell me that I should go there and help her cook some nsima for some women who went to maizemill to make ufa for the ceremony. Within few minutes I went there to help her and I found Rosemary, Vanessa and chief Mudzi B helping her cooking. Then the women told me to go and fetch some water because I cannot manage to cook some nsima with a very big tin + big cooking stick. I found them already started cooking and they said that sorry for disturbing you knitting but we saw that you were alone and we decided to call you to chat here not cooking. After few minutes we saw those women who went to the maize mill coming back Tinenenji, Pamela, Hilda, 2 dotta-in-laws of GVH, Emra and 2 grand dottas of group. The women cooked some nsima with beans and thelere. As they were eating Hilda asked Emra where she went for the last 3 wks, and she answered that I went to Ch. village to see my uncle (thinking rather that she went to see Ndaba) all the women laughed.

After eating some women left but chief Mudzi B, Sofia, Kondwani, Rosemary and 2 dotta-in-laws were still there chatting. As we were chatting chief Mudzi A + 1 brother of chief Mudzi B came and they were chatting at the fence. Then Rosemary followed the men to chat with them. And GVH started laughing and said that nowadays Rosemary started chatting with Hamra Austen. J: Hamra apparently stopped being angry with Rosemary, so Rosemary felt free again (to beg for ufa, chat with chief Mudzi A)]. During hunger season Rosemary was going there to beg
some ufa. Have you seen now! Rosemary + 2 men are chatting, reminding one another about the past. Then Kondwani said: Rosemary likes men & she knows a lot of traditional medicines to attract men, maybe she is trying to be back with chief Mudzi A bcoz she is not married (all the women laughed). I tried to listen to what they were discussing but failed bcoz the women were just laughing. Later on Rosemary came out of the fence and said that I have finished chatting, going home now, but chief and GVH you need to go inside the ironsheet house, there are some discussions there, I have been sent by chief Mudzi A.

Then I started my journey to fetch some water with Sofia. After this I went back home. On the way home Sofia told me that I must flash one of her brothers in SA. I flashed and they called then Sofia answered & explained that: I want to beg you some money to buy maize bcoz my marriage ended. When the finished talking, Sofia said that: have you heard what they have answered and I said no. they have answered that as of now they can not manage to send some money because I am married and I am just giving birth to a lot of children, while marriage is not just giving birth only! But love and taking care of each other (said brothers). Sofia continued that: I know that they can not send some money to me because we are not belonging to the same family? Someone else told me that: my parents died when I was still young and GVH is the one who took the responsibility of taking care of me up to getting married and gave birth to these children. But I know that: these brothers in SA are angry because I started querelling with my HB after giving birth to 2 children (that’s when HB started moving around with other women, quarrels started) and now I have got 4. (Sofia was not happy) but I just encouraged her to work hard in the field this year. So that she can manage to take care of her children and Sofia accepted.

At 6 Livia came she greeted me and said that: my HB will come tomorrow to meet with my parents but I will send Trinity to wait for him at Mz. village because my mother is ill and I will be busy cooking some food for him (g/nuts). I asked her what she is planning to cook and she answered that g/nuts and pumpkins. I asked her why not nsima and Livia laughed and answered that: maybe he will not marry me then I will just spent my ufa for nothing and she continued that I failed to go to the hospital because my mother is ill. I asked her if she explained to the HB that she has missed 2 months period and she said no I didn’t because I want to abort am not ready to be pregnant because Hana is very young, but if the medicine will not work that means I will tell him because I am still planning to go too a certain Traditional doctor but one of them is a friend of my mother and even Suset knows the medicine, but am afraid that she will tell my mother (she cried and continued her journey to the borehole).

In the morning after breakfast I went to see Phingi and when I reached there I greeted her and she said that: I am still not getting better because the one who came in a dream started beating me in the limbs and told me to tell Livia to buy sugar and make some tea
ceremony) and drink with Lovely, the real and best friend of my dotta who died. Later
on I saw Livia giving her mother a big pot with boiled water and some Traditional medicine in
the pot and her mother took 2 blankets covered the whole body and she said that the steam
will help her to get better not at the hospital. Then Rosemary came to greet her and said that I
will give you some Trad. medicine different from what you have now. And Phingi
accepted, then as there were discussing about the Trad. medicines Livia called me
separately and asked me to flash her HB to ask if he will indeed come but it was switched
off. And Livia started getting worried and said that: have you seen Getrude! I have
already told my mother that her son-in-law is coming but up to now he is not coming.
Then I saw grandson’s and granddotta’s of GVH going to harvest.

Then I saw Tumanene, Lovely and Elube carried maize in their heads (in bags or
dengu). Then I continued my journey to see what Suset is writing. I found her cooking
pumpkins and her mother was busy preparing to go to church. I checked everything but
there were few mistakes and I tried to remind her. On the way back I saw Aisha
carried maize on her head with the HB and Mr Ntawanga + wife carried maize on the bicycle.
Still on the way I met with Esnart and Nelia carried maize I greeted them
and Esnart said that: I hired Nelia to help me harvesting and I will give her some money.
I asked her how much and she said that I will see because I have not yet finished
harvesting. When I reached home I started cooking my nsima. Then after lunch Tumanene
and Livia came to chat. As we were knitting Tumanene said that most of the women have stopped
working hard in knitting they are just chatting but not adult school I asked them why but
they just laughed. And Livia answered that: most of the women likes gossiping then
may be when they are here they are not free to talk (afraid gissips will be heard by someone
in group and gossipers will be told on). Then Tumanene started saying that when I got married
to my HB who went to South Africa they were saying that my HB likes women. He
married for several times, but when I asked him he said that he married for 3 times with
women from other villages not here but the problem was that: all the 3 women were talkative
(kulongolola) just querelling every time, that’s why he decided to marry me because I stay
very far from this village. And Livia answered that your HB loves you because he was
buying some hair extensions for you, he had a grocery and now he is in SA and he sent
some money for you. And Tumanene smiled and said that it’s true. Tumanene’s dotta started
crying and she said that have you seen now if my HB was nearby I could have told him to
buy some biscuits for her (Livia laughed). She continued that: I know how to cook,
how to wash some cloths properly that’s why he is still staying with me but not going to
other wives.

At 4 she left, and Livia said that I sold maize to you I bought some extensions for
300mk for you to braid my hair, I want to be like you Getrude, I laughed and said that no
problem I can do as I started braiding her hair, I asked her that is it true that your new HB
doesn’t have a wife and she said no but he told me that he married twice but his wife was
just aborting when she was pregnant and he was angry and divorced but he didn’t tell me whether he has children or not (am still trying different Traditional medicine to abort but am failing). You tried Getrude to tell me not to sleep with him without protection but I didn’t listen. As of now am regretting and am trying to be very far with my mother, not staying near by am afraid that she will know before my HB comes to see her. The Livia continued that: I am going to cook for my mother now! I will come to chat tomorrow.

Then Sofia passed by she asked me to go with her to see her g.mother. When I reached home her grandmother told me that I am not getting better but stomach. I asked her if she went to the hospital but she said that: no but I went some where else to take some Traditional medicine. I don’t want to go to the hospital am tired. I went there last yr as of now I cannot go. It was already 6:05pm then we went back home and Sofia continued her journey.

Then Kingsley came, he greeted me and said that my g.friend from Kh. village will come to attend the ceremony at home then she will come here to greet you! Then I said no problem she can come to greet me and he continued that: she will come on Friday.

30 March Monday

In the morning when I waked up I saw Tumanene going to harvest alone in her field. Then Sofia was also going to harvest alone. Then I saw GVH and her grand children carried maize on their heads while Kingsley used a bicycle. Later on I went to see what Venesi and Sofia are writing about their expenses but I didn’t find them, all the doors were closed. Then the children told me that their parents have gone to attend a meeting at [clinic] village.

On the way back I went direct to greet Phingi and she told me that: at least am getting better now. But I have got a question I want to ask you! Then I said no problem you can then she asked me that: is it true Getrude that you are the one who gave a cellphone to Livia? And where is it now? Because Livia said that the c.phone is with her brother! But when I went to Balaka I asked my son why he is keeping the cell phone of Livia! And he said that I don’t know anything about a cellphone may be someone else gave her but not me and not Getruide. And I answered that: Livia have got a boyfriend and he is the one who gave her that phone. Phingi said that: this is true because Livia told me that she don’t want to get married with the one whom my friend found for her. But she want men from town, and now she cheated me that someone else will come but up to now he is not coming. Have you seen Suset now! She was just moving around with different men and now she is just becoming thin and thin. And I was happy when I heard that Livia is HIV negative, and I was expecting that: when she will have a new HB they will go for blood testing but have you seen now even my g.dotta who is staying here , came from J. village village her mother chased her
because she has a lot of boyfriends and she is keeping different letters from boys while she is 13yrs now. And yesterday my g.dotta went to J. village to the maize mill but when coming back she bought potatoes, matemba, soap, lotion! Saying that: Livia sent her to father of Hana to beg money, but I liked the one whom my friend found for Livia because he works hard in the field. But who is going to be the HB of Livia now because yesterday her new HB failed to come. Later on she sent my g.dotta to beg money to the ex-HB.

As of now I sent maize to my brother to sell, so that I can find some money to buy medicine. I asked her (Phingi) why she didn’t send the maize to me, so that I can buy and she said that sorry I forgot that you are also buying. Then we saw Livia coming back from the field, she was harvest in the field of her mother. Then I told her mother that: I am going back home. Then Livia followed me and asked what I was asking me about the cellphone and I told her the truth that your new husband is the one who gave you (Livia was not happy). Then I told Livia to flash her HB and ask why he failed to come last Sunday Livia flashed her HB called and asked that who is flashing me and Livia said that its me Livia! And he said I don’t know you, I am calling from Lilongwe, then he switched off his telephone. Livia cried and said that I know his voice and he is the one who answered the call and he knows your number but I don’t know why he is answering like this. Then I encouraged Livia to go to the hospital for check up and meet with her HB and ask why he failed to come and why he said I don’t know you.

Livia accepted. Later on I went back home and Sofia called me and said that lets go and fetch some water then I accepted. On the way Sofia said that have you seen Getrud? The brother of Jasmine came to take the maize because Jasmine went there in hunger season to take some money for 2 bags of maize (2000mk) and now he came to take the maize and GVH wants the maize now becoz she took money for 2 bags while her HB didn’t know. Even her friend borrowed almost 6 thousand for 6 bags of maize. On the way back I met with chief Mudzi B coming back from the field alone.

After lunch Kondwani, Ada, Vanessa, Livia, Tumanene came to knit and play bawo everybody liked bawo except Livia, I was braiding her hair and she was knitting then Vanessa + Kondwani started laughing and said that Ada your HB is still coming why can’t you just accept marriage so that he can help you to take care of the child. You have got cotton and he has cotton!?! (Both have money, will be helping each other). Ada laughed and she said that: I don’t want becoz when I will be with him, that means I will have another child. All the women laughed.

Later on we saw HB of Sofia passing by and Livia said that: he is going to see his children, and Kondwani said that at list Sofia has got 4 children from the same father while others have got children but with different fathers.
Then Tumanene flashed her HB using my phone and he called and talked with Tumanene. Tumanene was very happy then Vanessa said that its good for those women who have got HB in SA to be chatting together and those who don’t have HB must be chatting themselves because one day I talked to a certain woman at the borehole who has a HB in SA that, give me some soap I want to wash my cloths (I was joking) but she answered that you don’t want soap but you want my HB, I explained this to my HB and he told me to stop chatting with women who have HB in SA. Kondwani answered that: those women who has HB in SA are happy because they are able to find what they want like soap, lotion, cloths. It is now different with the time when their HB’s were staying here just depending on farming. Kondwani continued: a certain woman from this village called a HB of someone else from this village who is in SA, cheating that his wife has a boyfriend, but the HB answered that I will kill the one who is gossiping about my wife, I trust her and I know that she can not do anything. But most of the people in Mudzi B and Mudzi A likes gossiping because they don’t have HB but children from different HB’s. even the owner of this house people were saying that he married several times he likes women. While those women who are not married were coming knocking at the door at night asking to sleep with him, either to fetch some water for him inorder to find money, later on people said that he likes women. It’s just a matter of jealousy, said Kondwani.

Tumanene answered that: when my HB will be back from SA I don’t want to see a woman who is not married coming to chat with my HB, because later on they will be friends and start proposing each other (every body laughed). Livia answered that to say the truth those women who have HB in SA are enjoying although they miss each other but at list their children are growing up 3-4 years without another child.

Vanessa and Ada answered that: it’s good to come and knit or play bawo than staying at a big tree gossiping, some lightenings started and everybody said that this rain will destroy our maize and cotton because we have not yet finished harvesting. Indeed the rain started and everybody runned away. Then Sofia sent a messenger that she wanted to talk to me. I went there and she said that: have you seen this bag? My HB brought sobo, sugar 200mk, cloths for all the 4 children kamba snack, matemba (vegetables), tomatoe and he told me that: don’t worry I will start making new bricks next month to build a house for you. Sofia continued that ndasangalala (I am happy) because he said that his wife is spending a lot of money than me. And he said he will buy Irish potatoes for my children. Sofia said we will chat tomorrow because the heavy rain started.

In the morning when I waked up I started cleaning plates and Livia said that I am going to Balaka to the hospital with my child and my mother told me at night that: if you want to get married no problem. Just go and tell your HB to come and meet with me. then I will
Then Kondwani and Vanessa came to show me what they were knitting, then Kondwani said that I will not go and help GVH cooking today at M. village, but tomorrow because my son is ill (malaria) and it’s good for me not to get married because I will not manage to take care of the children (new HB will want children of his own). Have you seen now am busy with my child alone here while my HB went to marry someone else. And anyone else who will propose me I will not accept then Vanessa said that: at list you are working hard in the field and now you have planted tomatoes at dambo (garden) field. You will sell and buy what you want and since your HB left I have never heard that you are somewhere else with men. Then Kondwani said that let’s go now because some people will start gossiping thinking that we came this morning inorder to eat breakfast. (Then they left). Then Sofia came and she said that: I am going at M. village to cook for the ceremony I will be back tomorrow, then HB of Gettie passed (volunteer teacher), and Sofia said that have you seen that boy he is in relationship with Pamela and his friend, an in-law of Esnart is in relationship with Grace. Most of the women who are not married in this villages likes men in order to find money for soap.

I am going! We will chat later! Said Sofia. After breakfast I went to Evelin to see what she has been writing then on the way I went to greet Grace and told her to knit what Julia wants for her child and she accepted and told her to say the price to Julia. Then Grace was happy. I found her eating maungu (pumpkins) and she said that yesterday I went at Zomba for campaign and tomorrow we will go at Mangochi. Then I told Grace that am coming we will chat later.

Then I went to Pamela, I found her sitting on the veranda with her child and she said that I am not getting better with my child (malaria) I went at [nearest tradingcenter] and they said that no medicine for malaria, then later I decided that may be its HIV positive and went for blood testing with my son and we are all negative. I started thinking for blood testing because I have seen that Jeneti is now fat as if she is not positive and at the hospital they said that as of now they will be moving around in villages so that every body should be tested. And they will be coming everyday at the big tree for 2-3 weeks so that those who wanted to be tested [J: did they? No, G didn’t hear anything else about it. Pamela meant compulsory testing, maybe to scare other people] should go near by. But I know that a lot of people from this village will not go because they are afraid but we can have an example through Jeneti. She continued that even Haliday (her in-law) was there at [nearest tradingcenter] hospital but she didn’t think of going for blood testing, she asked me what I was doing in that room and I told her that I went for blood testing in order to know either I am Positive-Negative.

After this I went to greet Sofia and checked what she has been writing and everything was ok. And she said that sorry Getrude we will not chat because I am at the field harvesting and I said no problem. From there I greeted Molly and I found her eating maungu with the
HB, then I continued my journey to Venesi.

I didn’t find her but her dotta said that she is still harvesting. Then I went straight to Grace, but I found her chatting with in-law of Esnart the one whom Sofia said that he is her boyfriend. I didn’t hear her properly what they were discussing and I decided to go back home. And I told Grace that we will chat later. Then Tumanene passed by and said that my HB said that he will be back soon (has never come (end May now). For a month people have been saying that the HBs of Lovely and Haliday will come, without them showing up) and sa of now he just sent 2000mk to buy soap.

After lunch I saw mother of Dorica and her HB coming back from the field they carried maize on their heads. Then a certain woman came with Kondwani to play bawo and Kondwani said that this is Makuta and now her HB called from SA telling her to take a bicycle and money that the HB sent. The woman laughed and introduced herself to me, she said that: I married with my cousin and now its almost 4yrs since he left, he left me when my youngest dotta was 9 months old. And when I asked him to come back because I missed him he says that: I will just cut my penis and sent it to you. And am lucky because I work hard in the field but imagine 4yrs without sleeping with my HB. Kondwani laughed and said that it is the same as the one who is not married.

The woman continued that: I left school when I was in form 2 after writing examination, the one who was paying school fees for me died and when I was in relationship with him he was growing cotton and paying school fees for me. Later on he failed and we got married. Then granddotta of GVH joined bawo then Kondwani told the granddotta’s of Mudzi B that mwayamba zibwenzi (you have started having boyfriends) and the 2 girls laughed and said that: we are following what Jane is doing. Kondwani continued that: when we were coming back from chigayo for the ceremony, you stayed some where else eating sugarcanes with boys, you will have children and fail to take care of them. The girls laughed and said that tikufuna tizolowere (we want to get used to chatting with boys like other girls do). [we want to get used to chatting with boys like other girls do] (one of them was indeed caught having sex with a boy in bush at M. village around 6pm, is only 13 yrs old.) because all the women who are married now started relationship and ended into marriage and we didn’t expect that Ada can have a child and now she is managing to take care of her.

Kondwani continued that: please when you are cooking relish don’t add some salt because you will make your g.mother is ill (why? Traditional belief. Kondwani thinks g.mother is ill because girls added salt to relish). The girls laughed and shaked hands. Kondwani: and now you are rude after telling you to clean plates, even to cook before 1 o’clock to fetch some water. You used to refuse, meaning that you have known that in marriage people used to have sex [J: because the girls are growing up and having boyfriends, they know people have sex, therefore can’t respect them anymore like before when they were still young], as you are doing with your
Then Kondwani said that I saw Livia chatting with Mr. Chikombo that means the relationship is still there, Livia has a lot of boyfriends she likes money, have you seen now she is braiding her hair with extensions, instead of buying something else for her children [J: extensions were bought with money from selling 50 kg of maize to Getrude for 1200mk]. Dotta-in-law of GVH laughed and said that she will die with AIDS like her sister. Later on all the 2 women and 2 girls left they said that they were going to cook some nsima before the rain because there was lightnings (but no rain).

1 April 2009

In the morning when I waked up I started washing plates then I saw Tumanene, Thokozani going to harvest. Later on I saw Kondwani coming she greeted me and said that: GVH told me yesterday to come and tell you to go with me today at M. village to attend the 40 days ceremony of her HB because he was your friend and you should see what happens at the ceremony because you said you will be attending everything that people in the village do and I said no problem I will go with you. And I saw Kondwani and Vanessa coming to tell me that we should go and Livia joined us. On the way Livia started saying that: Getrude, ine sizikuyenda (I am not doing well), someone else gave me some tablets (2) she didn’t mention the name, I tried those tablets yesterday at night but up to now I don’t see changes in the body. But still more I will not stop, I will try to continue different medicines.

Then Kondwani said that: what are you discussing about? Then we said nothing and Kondwani continued that: Livia you told me that you will start the business of selling beans where are you going to get the money: because you told me that you gave 500mk to your mother when she was ill in order to buy medicine but your mother didn’t ask you where you got the money. But I want to know where you find the money so that I can go and have mine. Livia smiled and said that I will not tell you because you will tell my mother. When we reached at M. village a lot of men, boys, women and few girls were there, but only men were praying but all the women were busy cooking. They slaughtered a big goat and a lot of chickens with a lot of nsima and thobwa (gruel), 3 big clay pots and 1 big tin. I started helping the women washing plates and fetching some water with Jane, Livia.

On the way to borehole at M. village I asked Jane why she is back from the HB then she answered that: I just decided to choose to go back there but now am back because of the ceremony but also because Sofia my friend told my new HB that I married last months ago with another HB and now he sent me back but on the way back I met with my ex-boyfriend and he started asking to sleep with him in the bush but I refused because a lot of people were just passing by and Livia asked her that why are you just exchanging men and B answered that I’m following what you are doing because you think that there is no-
one else who always see what you are doing, I met with you oneday with a certain man but you didn’t recognise that it was Jane (Livia laughed). After fetching some water we started cooking and everybody was busy.

At lunch a lot of plates of nsima went where men and boys gathered, with chicken, goat meat and beans [J: women don’t sit together to eat? All women were busy cooking, meanwhile some groups would eat and exchange turns to eat and cook. G’s mother told her not to attend those muslim ceremonies is sin, as if cerebrating that someone died. When the person was ill and wanted meat they don’t give, but now suddenly they can prepare enough for everybody] HB of Malita is the one who was asking the women to send a lot of nsima to men and he said that nowadays a lot of boys are ashamed to eat with a group of people because they have got girlfriends and when they meet at home or somewhere else the girls used to say that: I was ashamed because of the way you eat. You eat a lot of nsima or ndiwo (all the women laughed) after helping them cooking chief Mudzi B gave me some nsima to eat. Soon after lunch everybody departed and on the way people started discussing that: very soon we will also cerebrate for Thandizo who died.

When we reached home, Kondwani and Wisikesi came to play bawo. Then Kondwani started saying that my marriage ended because the HB was beating me (1st HB) but the (2nd HB) we divorced because he was just moving around with different women and I was afraid of AIDS. But at the beginning he was jealousy as if he was loving me, when I was at the borehole he was, telling me to spent 3-5 minutes only, going and coming back if not he was calling me loudly - saying Kondwani! Come back please! I want to go somewhere else and when coming back he was saying that I told you to spent 3-5 min and now its 10 mins, then don’t go out of the fencew because when you will be chatting with your friends they will be cheating you to end the marriage, you will be gossiping and everybody will be laughing at me saying that am jealousy. Wisikesi asked that may be he wanted to sleep with you often, Kondwani laughed and said that: not at all. After these words Kondwani said that: lets go we will continue chatting tomorrow! Then they left.

2 April 2009 Thursday

In the morning there was rainfall for 10-15 minutes. After the rain I went to fetch some water then I met with Kondwani harvesting with chief Mudzi B. On the way back I found Julia at the veranda with 25kgs of maize and she said that am selling these maize I discussed with my HB to sell because he don’t have enough money to continue his BS then I said ok I will buy.

Then Innocent passed by with angry face I greeted her but she didn’t respond as usual.
Then Tumanene passed by I greeted her and she said that ndikudwala malungo (I am suffering from malaria) and am going to buy pain killers because at [nearest trading center] no medicine. Around 11 Jane came and she said that I want to knit for 10-15 minutes and she started saying that my grandmother is now back! But I don’t know whether they (all his wives) will share the money that the HB left for cows when he died but I just heard that the ceremony will continue here on 5th April and my grandmother bought a big goat, beans and chickens and 2 bags of ufa (maize flour). Then Sofia passed by and said Jane I want to talk to you! Then B left and followed her, then I saw Naima passing by with the HB carried the maize on their heads. Soon after lunch Kondwani, Makuta and Tumanene came to knit, then Kondwani started saying that: I have stopped playing bawo and I have decided to continue knitting and I said no problem. Then Tumanene said that Gertrude teach me how to send a text then Makuta laughed and said that at least G you are helping a lot of women in this village.

But a lot of women or men didn’t go for with education, only 4 sons of GVH went to secondary school including HB of Blessings, then the woman said that she left school in std 6 and now her HB sent blankets and zitenje for sale but after selling she is sending the money back to SA and she has radio but I have never heard her listening to that radio even a screen (said Makuta) but I don’t understand why she is just keeping those things. I have got mine that my HB sent and I watch TV even listening to music that I like. But I also don’t understand why she came back when she was pregnant in SA instead of giving birth there and continue the job. May be she was failing to speak English, because my HB told me to practice speaking English so that I can be able to work there and he said that when I will be pregnant I can give birth there.

Then Tumanene said that: I have remembered that Grace had her 1st born dotta at Mzuzu when she went to visit her uncle. A man from Mzuzu but I don’t know why her marriage ended. Makuta said that: please listen to me I have missed my HB and Tumanene answered that even myself, every night I used to see his pictures and some tears come out after remembering his face and the way that he was loving me buying everything that I wanted and working together in the field.

Then Jane joined us and she said that Gertrude I have got maize 50kg and am selling at 1300mk and I said if you are serious I can buy and she said its true because I want to buy a cellphone (did she sell her maize? No, but bought cellphone from mother that boyfriend gave her, may be she sold the maize to her grandmother) for easy communication with my boyfriend.

Then Tumanene and Kondwani said that: please lets go and greet GVH and ask if they have shared the property that the HB left, we all agree but Jane said that I will not go with you. May be someone else will come to knit and I will tell her to wait for you when we reached there we greeted her and she started explaining that am back now but as we were
discussing about what my HB left everybody said that lets leave every thing to the one who was taking care of the one who died but they don’t know that he left 4 cows they are thinking that all died. They also said that about robes for mosque. My 2 g.sons must share with some nice trousers because they were helping me to take care of him. As she was explaining this some women came to talk to her and Tumanene said that “we are going we will come later to chat with you” then GVH said that no problem.

On the way back all the women said that: we can not continue knitting but we will come tomorrow and I said no problem. At home Jane said that am going home we will meet tomorrow and I said no problem. I continued knitting alone up to dark hours.

3 April Friday 2009

In the morning when I waked up I started preparing my breakfast then I saw chief Mudzi B carried maize with her 3 children. They were coming back from the field. Later on I saw Chisoni also carried maize on her head with her sister. After breakfast Kingsley came to borrow a bicycle and he said that I am going to Kh. village to my girlfriend and I will be back with her. Then I said no problem. Still in the morning I went to pay rent to GVH, then on the way I saw Rosemary drying her maize and when I reached to GVH’s house she greeted me and said that I’m not getting better! Am just feeling pain in the stomach and some one else gave me some medicine.

Later on I went to fetch some water then I met with Tumanene going to harvest alone, she greeted me and said that: ndikudwala malungo (I am suffering from malaria) and I said sorry. Near the borehole I saw Jane harvesting and she said to me that: I will sell this maize to you and I said ok.

Soon after lunch I saw Kingsley + ex-HB of Fatima + a girl they came home and I greeted them. Then Kingsley said that this one is my girlfriend whom I was talking about, Kingsley left and I was chatting with the girl. I asked her where they met and she said that girlfriend of son of Venesi is from Kh. village. HB of Fatima married to Kh. village and my friend who is in relationship with Garison (son of Venesi who left for SA (he left primary school early, but girlfriend is in form 3) is the one who told me that there is a certain boy who wants a girlfriend and I said I should meet with him and after meeting with him I accepted. I asked her if she is going to school and she said yes am in form 2 and Catholic, and she continued that we will get married after finishing my education (so big difference in education level. Girlfriend of Garison told Kingsley that she saw his girlfriend moving around with another boy for some weeks. G doesn’t think these relationships will work, maybe will only last until his cotton money finishes]. Kondwani and Wisikesi came to knit and to chat with a visitor. As we were chatting Kondwani said that, all the blankets that the HB of Blessings sent her in-law is the one who is selling it Balaka everyday and the money is sent back to the HB in SA.
Wisikesi laughed and said that I cannot accept to do it but do you remember that Blessings’s HB when coming back from SA he was bringing a girlfriend at his house while Blessings was still there. Blessings was sleeping at the veranda with her first born child and the HB was sleeping in the house with a girlfriend but Blessings was quite. Kondwani answered that even all the time when the HB of Lovely and Blessings and Esnart came back from South Africa they used to stay at Balaka, spending their time in a hotel coming back to the village at night, they don’t have time to chat with their wives but only to sleep with them. Wisikesi answered that I can just follow him everywhere. And imagine now my HB said that I should learn to put on mini-skirts, treating my hair like what other women are doing in SA (everybody laughed) and Sofia said that because you married to your cousin that’s why he is loving you.

Later on son of Ntawanga came and he said that my father and mother sent me to sell maize and he sold 10kgs = 250mk. Then he said that Chikondi told me to tell you that [newborn son] is just coughing and I said ok I will come to greet him. Then Tumanene said that you should braid my hair and I said no problem. The rain started and everybody left except Tumanene.

As we were chatting Tumanene said that may be my HB will be back soon from SA. He wants to come and see his children. Am happy because I miss him (I failed to use a voice recorder because of rain and the women wanted to listen from a radio. Soon after braiding her hair she left and said that I will come tomorrow. I continued knitting alone up to dark hours.

April 4 2009, Saturday

In the morning when I waked up I saw son of Chikondi coming to sell maize 7kgs for 175mk, I asked him why his mother decided to sell & he said that I don’t know but the twins are not getting better they have gone at [nearest tradingcenter] hospital & she told me sell this maize to you. Still in the morning I saw Chisoni & her sister carried maize on their heads coming back from the field. Later on around 11am I saw some women from Mudzi A passed by! I greeted them & they said that we are going to help GVH making some thobwa (gruel) for the ceremony tomorrow. Then Chikondi passed by she greeted me and said that: am coming back from the hospital. And I sent my child to sell some maize bcoz I don’t have money to buy soap, may be my HB will come and ask you if I sold some maize but just tell him that I don’t know. He is now in the field [J: why not tell her HB she sold maize to G? G: wanted to use the money secretly so that he will give her some money too], he is harvesting and wants to sell here. Then Naima passed by with a c-phone then Chikondi asked that; do you have a cellphone & she answered that no! but it’s for my mother. My uncle sent from SA, then I saw Hamra going to make thobwa [at GVH for ceremony].

Soon after lunch I decided to go and chat with the women making thobwa, when I reached
there the rain started and GVH said that any-one else who knows that she/he is a last born in the family must take a stick but wet and take an axe. Make a small hole and put a stick with some stones and axe on top so that the rain must stop. And Rashida said that: the one who will do this should not drink some water. I told them that I will do it and g.son of GVH said that I will help you Getrude. Indeed the rain stopped but later on the g.son of GVH forgot the rules and drunk some water, then the heavy rain started and disturbed the cooking (all women laughed and said that: someone else didn’t follow the instructions then g.son laughed and said that it’s me I was thirsty and I went to drink water in secret (everybody laughed). When the rain stopped I went back home.

Around 3:30pm Kondwani and dotta in-law of GVH (Wisikesi) came to knit. They told me that: feel free to come and help us cooking tomorrow, and I said no problem I will come, as we were chatting Wisikesi started saying that GVH told me that if you have got airtime you should call this number and tell the one who will answer that the ceremony will be tomorrow. Kondwani asked who is he? Then she answered that; my uncle is in relationship with her (GVH) and she went there one day to take some materials to make nkhoewe (maize storage) (he is married). Then at lunch the wife of my uncle said that am going to search some ndiwo (masamba) but my uncle said that please prepare some eggs (4) and later on GVH wanted some Trad. medicine & instead of going with the wife of my uncle at the bush, my uncle said that I will go with you. But it seems as if the wife don’t know anything about the relationship and now my uncle said that he will just give her (GVH) some money to hire someone else to make nkhoewe. That’s why she said that I must call him to come tomorrow as if he wants to attend the ceremony, while to discuss something with him. Kondwani laughed and said that I know about this relationship, it started before her HB died and now she has a better chance to chat and he said that this year he will hire some men to work in GVH’s field and he will pay. D.in-law continued: but Phingi one day came to my mother and said that: GVH is HIV positive that’s why the HB died and please tell your brother to stop relationship with her. Kondwani said that Phingi is always jealousy and gossiping. One day she was saying that: I wish I could get married to one man from Mudzi B village but they don’t propose me bcoz I can be able to have money through ganyu (casual labour) or sons from SA. And my uncle divorced from his wife and Phingi said that why can’t he just marry my dotta but my uncle refused and he is now in SA. We didn’t tell GVH about her gossiping bcoz she can be angry and sent her back to her village said d-in-law.

Then Sofia said that son of Jasmine said that he has maize but 35mk per kg and you can give him the money now for 3-4 bags but he will come with the maize tomorrow. Then I said no bcoz people are buying at 25mk or 30mk per kg, and I want to ex-change maize with money but not money without maize. Then he came with a 50 kgs bag of maize but I bought at 1500mk (30mk per kg). Phingi and Livia complained to me that we borrowed 1000mk in hunger season we promised to pay 50 kg of maize and now he wanted the maize that’s why he said it’s 35mk per kg bcoz he wanted profit. When Livia and Phingi left, Sofia laughed and said that my mother wants her 2 bags of maize, Gertrude 1 bag. Kondwani answered that; at D.
village she also borrowed money for 2 bags but they don’t have a lot of maize to pay back. Sofia continued that; she is doing this while her HB is at Balaka to buy some parts for his bike. Sofia said chief Mudzi A came to sell maize to me (500mk ½ bag of 50kg). I borrowed some money from my g.mother and bought.

Sofia: As of now he [chief Mudzi A] is still chatting with Rosemary, maybe the relationship is still there. Kondwani said that my HB sent 200mk through Ellesi and he said that I should buy soap. My brother from SA sent 4000mk to share with my sister (chief Mudzi B) the money that we begged for the ceremony and soap.

Then rain started but not heavy and everybody left. I didn’t use a voice recorder becoz everybody wanted to listen to the radio about elections and campaign.

5 April 2009 Sunday

Early in the morning some one else knocked at the door when I went out I found Esnart with a basin of maize to sell and it was 11kgs = 275mk. And she said that I want to go to Balaka to buy something. My HB didn’t sent money up to now. That’s why I decided to sell the maize, later on Lovely and dotta-in-law of GVH passed they greeted me and said that we have seen Esnart with a basin of maize coming here to sell, why is she selling maize while her HB stays in SA and she said that he used to send a lot of money than everybody in the village. then I said I don’t know, the women laughed and shaked hands.

Still in the morning dotta in-law of GVH (Wisikesi) called me and said that; GVH sent me to tell you that you should go and help her cooking for the ceremony. A lot of women will go to help but she want you to go and cook for that special visitor. Rice and goat meat + veg + chicken. And I said no problem just wait for me to have my breakfast. I went there to help her, then on the way I asked her who is that special visitor, she smiled and said that; her new HB that I told you yesterday (we all laughed) and she said GVH is very happy but don’t tell her that I told tou that he is her new HB becoz it’s a secret story. Then I said no problem I will just do what she asked me to when we reached there. GVH called me separately and said that please cook this for me I want to give my visitor to eat. Other women were also busy cooking goat meat, thobwa, nsima and beans. Women from M. village, Mudzi B, Mudzi A (others I don’t know) a lot of people gathered, there was some clouds and 1 woman said that please lets do what we did yesterday for the rain not to come becoz it will disturb and they asked the one who will not manage to stay without drinking water then I said I can manage. Everybody was busy cooking and I called separately the dotta-in-law of GVH to show me the new HB of GVH and she showed me, (with nice clothes). I asked her whether he is a business man or anything else that he is doing for GVH to accept and she said that: he has a lot of livestock like cows, goats, pigeons, chickens, a big field with a lot of harvest and now at the beginning my uncle was sending some milk to her cheating his wife that GVH bought.
I continued cooking and Livia joined me, I asked about her boyfriend and she answered that he said he will come today and my mother is at home waiting for him, but I didn’t prepare anything coz am not sure that he will come. About pregnancy Livia answered that: I have managed to abort and now am having my periods (it was difficult for me to believe coz she likes cheating). Then I met with Dorica I asked her about her father and she answered that he is back to Mangochi and I don’t know if he will be back soon. He said he wanted to continue his BS, I continued asked her about the one who proposed her and she said that: I refused coz I want to continue going too school but not getting married. And it’s true that he proposed me.

After cooking I told GVH that: I have finished cooking and she said that thanks a lot but wait for few minutes so that you can just have your lunch here then I accepted. Soon after eating a certain girl sat near me, I greeted her and she started introduced herself to me that: am the wife of Boris (in-law of Esnart the one who speaks English). He impregnated me in 2006 when I was in form 1 while he was in form 3. and now he is failing to marry( live together? After impregnation she first stayed at home village, she would only visit her give money for soap but not tell her to come stay with him. But from this time G saw her in this village fetching water) me I asked her if he helps her to take care of the child and she said yes and now everyday he comes home to chat. But he don’t talk about marriage. And I used to regret coz I didn’t go far with education. D-in-law of GVH joined and the girl stopped talking.

Then d-in-law started telling me that: I was with Pamela, Grace and I asked Pamela if she is married now and she answered that no but I have got a boyfriend in Mudzi B but she didn’t mention his name. About Grace she answered that there is a certain boy who used to come at night at her house (she laughed).About Evelin, Ana told me that she is in relationship with HB of Elube, continued d-in-law of GVH. I asked her why she asked this question to Pamela and she answered that there are my relatives and I wanted to know. The wife of Boris left, then Vanessa came and said that Boris is now married to this girl, the one whom he impregnated and its good coz the girl was going to school and he is the one who stopped her.

Around 3pm I went back home to knit but I didn’t see any one else harvesting or carrying maize, may be coz everybody was busy helping cooking and eating at ceremony. When I reached home I started knitting no one else joined me, up to dark hours. After eating super I slept, that was the end of the day.

6 April 2009 Monday

In the morning when I waked up I went to fetch some water and it was the first time for Thokozani to start talking to me. She greeted me and I greeted back then I started thinking of giving a picture to her HB. On the way to the borehole I saw Lovely, Tumanene, Chisoni and Amila
going to harvest. On the way back I met with son of GVH (father of Jane) he stopped me and said that: please flash my brothers in SA this is the phone number. I want to talk to them bcoz we have now finished the ceremony. I flashed and didn’t call and he told me that tell them to call me on Saturday so that I can talk to them.

On the way back from the borehole I met with Livia and she said that my mother has gone to the hospital. She is still not getting better (malaria) and I [Livia] wanted to steal some maize to start giving you but I have failed bcoz Fatima and Davie are near by. I asked her [Livia] if the boyfriend came to meet with her parents and she said he didn’t and I don’t know why. But I have sent one of his friend to ask him why he failed, bcoz am busy and I cannot have chance to go to Balaka. Then Livia continued her journey. Then I saw Sofia harvestin near Mudzi B’s house. Later on Jane, Kondwani and dota-in-law of GVH came to knit, then dotta-in-law of GVH asked Jane why she is having a lot of boyfriends and she answered that I want to find money for soap and lotion bcoz my g.mother told me that they cannot manage to give me money. But when I was at Salima to the elder sister of my mother, she was buying soap and lotion and I didn’t have time to have a boyfriend. After few minutes Kondwani and Jane left, they promised to come back soon after lunch.

Then dotta-in-law of GVH remained and she asked me to flash her HB in SA inorder to tell him to talk to father of Jane. And I told her that: he came to flash and they said that they will discuss on Saturday, and I asked her what they wanted to discuss and she said that the boys from SA wants to talk to their mother according to the behaviour that GVH used to do. She has extra boyfriends apart from my uncle and she used to choose those men who are chiefs, group vg headman, or someone else whom she know that he has money. And her children knows the behaviour that’s why they came to flash inorder to discuss what to do or say to their mother. After this she went for lunch and she asked me to help her harvesting one day and I said no problem.

Later on Chikondi came to sell maize 4kgs = 100mk and I failed to ask her what she wanted to use the money bcoz she said that: I cheated my HB that am going to fetch some water in order to sell maize here. (we all laughed and shaked hands) and she told me that I will start selling cotton next week and make 2 baby suits for my kids and I said no problem I will. After lunch Amila came to give me firewood in order for me give her 50mk for her HB to buy batteries while her 2 children have got malaria. I asked her why she didn’t buy painkillers for the kids, and she answered that I am afraid that he can be angry and now he plans to start working at [large commercial estate] although he don’t want. son of Elube is the one who came to tell him to start working there and it will be 5000mk and she continued that HB of Elube started now receiving 6000mk at [large commercial estate]? He works at Alma feeding goats, but told HB of Amila that he can help him to find a job at [large commercial estate]. HB liked the thought of the money but didn’t think he could manage to do the work. G say it is sometimes difficult to follow what Amila is saying. Starting a new story before the first one is over, mixing stories. Her eldest son (14yrs)
works at [large commercial estate] stays with uncle.]. Then Amila left.

Later on I saw Hamra carried a tin as if she was going to fetch somewater while coming to sell some maize and it was 8kgs 200 MK (his maize, she secretly took more of his maize to sell). She told me that: My HB is the one who told me to sell the maize in order to buy painkillers bcoz he is not getting better, but please tell him that it was 100MK not 200MK. Tomorrow I will come to sell for 500MK, I want to buy chitenje, but please don't tell him. And I said don't worry, I will not.

Later on Jane came, she asked me to borrow her my phone to flash her boyfriend to tell him that she wanted to go there on Saturday to chat. After flashing the boy called and discussed to meet on Friday. Then I asked Jane if he was not married and she said Yes! He is married with 2 kids and he is the one whom I said that he is in from 3 & he gives me a lot of money to buy what I want. Then she asked me to braid her hair and I did it.

Later on dotta in-law of GVH (Wisikesi) and Kondwani joined me knitting and Doris passed by she was going to fetch some water and the women said that; have you seen Jane, your friend Doris is now married [J: true? Yes was married shortly (6-8 weeks) but HB left] Jane laughed. And Jane continued that on Christmas day my boyfriend gave me money to buy soft drinks and he promised to come at night to spend a night with me and I accepted. Then around 6pm my boyfriend came and we met at Alisa’s house and Alisa her boyfriend came, then Alisa + her boyfriend spent a night at the bedroom while I and my boyfriend spent a night at the sitting room. But the problem was that we didn’t have blankets, I asked her if they use condoms and she said that we don’t. I asked her why and she answered that most of my bf don’t like condoms and they have never asked me about condom (the women laughed).

The women left and went to watch football match. Jane remained and some 2 boys called her and started chatting, from there Jane started explaining that one of the 2 boys proposed me and I refused. I told him that I have a boyfriend who wants to marry me, and he said that no problem we will see who will be the first to marry you. I met with this boy one day at [nearest tradingcenter] but I don’t like him bcoz he don’t know how to wash his body properly (we all laughed). Jane continued later on the other boy told me to accept and I said I will give you my phone number bcoz it is difficult to accept relationship for the first time, still the other boy said that just accept and kiss each other. I just laughed and runned away coming here (said Jane). Jane continued that I told you Getrude that I runned away from my HB bcoz he was just sleeping with me often like what happened to Pamela. She told Lovely that she chased her HB (new HB) bcoz he was just sleeping with her often almost 3 times a day and 2-3 times at night [J: when? The one who helped her in the field during hunger season. The one before HB of Getrude, was married for only few weeks. She told G that she chased him bcoz he wasn’t helping her in field, but Jasmine said he did help. G can’t believe about story bcoz of the porno magazine story - she must liking sex!], (we all laughed loudly) and Jane said that I am
going I will come again to chat tomorrow. I continued knitting alone up to darkness. (that was
the end of the day).

1587    7 April 2009 Tuesday

1588    In the morning when I waked up I saw Makuta coming to borrow my
    cellphone. She said that please G I want to flash someone else and I gave her. The man called
    her and discussed to meet somewhere else so that her mother-in-law should not know. She
told me that I’m coming, I want to meet with someone else. When coming back there she told
    me that; I went to meet with a certain friend, I begged money 140 for airtime and he gave me
500mk (smiled) he is my real friend. And I said that ok. I think that he was her boyfriend bcoz I met
    with them one day together. She explained to me that; I don’t understand why Esnart put
    on a trouser when going to Balaka, may be she wanted to meet with someone else or a boyfriend,
    bcoz I don’t understand why she didn’t participate the ceremony for the HB of GVH. after
this she continued her journey to the field.

1589    After breakfast Jane came to greet me as we were chatting she started flashing her boyfriend using
    my phone and Jane said that I like this man bcoz he gives me a lot of money but the only
    problem is that: he don’t have time to chat with me, like telling me any story to make
    me happy. But he used to chat with me when he wants to sleep with me (she laughed) and
    Jane continued that: At night yesterday my 2 young sisters were chatting with boys at the
    tap up to 11:30 pm but imagine they were chatting with boys but my g.mother was not angry
    and she didn’t ask anything.

1590    Then later on we saw g.son of GVH + a son of Rosemary and Kondwani picking cotton in
    GVH’s field (ganyu) and Jane said that they are doing ganyu, they have started earlier
    bcoz they are afraid of thieves then Vanessa came to sell maize 8kgs, she said that she wanted
to buy chemical to treat her hair. Then dotta of Lovely came to sell 4kgs at 100mk. Mr
    Ntawanga 5 kgs = 125mk dotta of Ntawanga 6kgs = 150mk. Dotta of Blessings 2kgs = 50mk
    the other dotta of Tumanene 1kg = 25mk, 2 dottas of Elube 1kg = 25mk the other one 1kg =
    25mk they told me that they wanted to buy what they want like mandasi, biscuits.

1591 Then Jane said that my g.mother has gone to [small crossroads market] to receive her salary (for being GVH). I
    asked her how much and she said I don’t know, and I saw Kondwani + her 3 children carried
    3kgs bags of cotton and Kondwani said that; am afraid of thieves that’s why I harvested earlier
    but not yet matured bcoz of the light of the moon its easy for thieves to steal, said Kondwani.

1592 Then Jane left, soon after lunch I continued knitting and Wisikesi + Ellesi
    joined me. Sofia called me and started laughing that have you seen Livia! She has started
relationship with a certain boy (rasta) who sells beans, she cheated that she wanted to start a BS
of selling beans not knowing that the rasta man wants to give her some beans to sell (she laughed loudly).

Then the women started asking how much they have harvested, Lovely came for me to braid her hair and Wisikesi asked Lovely how much she harvested and she said 1 full nkhokwe (maize storage) but last yr 1½ nkhokwe but this yr bcoz of running water and about Blessings, Lovely answered that 1 full nkhokwe and 2 baskets but last yr it was 2 full nkhokwe. Then Kingsley passed by and Wisikesi said that: Ellesi, why did the relationship with Kingsley ended? And she answered that nothing! Then Lovely said that: its good bcoz you belong to the same village and you can not respect each other. Wisikesi laughed loudly and said that you were having sex in a certain cotton field last yr, have you remembered? Ellesi didn’t answer but Lovely said that please don’t remind them about the past.

Lovely continued that my HB will come soon and we discussed that I must go for injection (child spacing) and am happy. Then Wisikesi said that that’s good bcoz most of the women don’t use condoms even myself. And you Lovely, you can’t cheat me that you used condom before or even in marriage. I was born in this village and no-one else can cheat me. Kondwani joined and Chikondo said that: I met with your ex-HB and he gave me 100mk to give you inorder to buy soap for the children. Then Kondwani said that thanks a lot.

Lovely continued that Sofia and Venesi went for ganyu (casual labour) in the field of dotta of Alma inorder to receive chitenje or soap or lotion (harvesting and kutonola (shelling)) that’s what they do all the yrs. Later on Charity and her mother came to take K1250 for 1 bag of maize (50kg) and promised to bring the maize on 9th April. At 5:49 everybody left, but I didn’t use a v. recorder bcoz the women liked to seat near the tree, I continued knitting up to dark hours.

8 April 2009 Wednesday. [doorgekrast]

Early in the morning when I waked up Livia came to sell 3kgs = 75mk of maize and she said that I borrowed 100mk to Sofia and I want to give back. Then I asked her about my 50kg bag and she said that I will give you later. Then she asked me to buy thread for her and she will give the maize but I refused I said that already have my maize and you are failing to give me and how I can not give you thread unless you give me the maize. Kingsley laughed and said that Livia! You liked borrowing a lot of money but I don’t know what you use bcoz you are still staying with parents. And Livia didn’t answer anything.

8 April 2009

In the morning when I waked up, Monya and her sister (dottas of Rashida) came to sell maize, Monya 3kgs = 75mk, her sister 4kgs = 100mk and they told me that we want to buy
mandasi with that money bcoz Tumanene said that she will start that BS today.

Then I started clearing the house and washing plates. Later on I went to fetch some water then I saw Chisoni going to harvest. And I also met with GVH + 3 grandchildren going to harvest their maize. Then at the borehole I met Hilda and Lovely going to their fields to harvest. Soon after breakfast, Makuta came to borrow my bike and she told me that: sorry G but I want to meet with the same man who gave me 500mk. He is my boyfriend, you know G I cannot manage to stay without sex since 2005 and I know that my HB is not just staying without girlfriend. But I will try to keep it secret but even yourself don’t tell my mother-in-law. This man used to give me some money and now am arranging for a birthday party on 28 April and I will come to pick you on my bike so that we can cerebrate together and that bf is the one who will buy some food. But no-one else from mgwir a will come bcoz they like gossiping. Imagine G, even XXX has a boyfriend, one day some one else found her doing sex in a kitchen (she laughed) and said that I will come later.

After lunch I continued knitting and Isaw HB of Sofia passing by, then Tumanene came and told me that please G give me 500mk and I will bring maize anyday! I want to start a BS of selling mandasi. Then I gave her 500mk. Then I started my journey to Suset to check what she has been writing, then Sofia stopped me and she said that my HB came and gave me 500mk to buy soap for the children and am happy. Then I told her that just continue loving your HB then Sofia laughed.

Still on the way I saw HB of Naima packing maize full nkhokwe (maize storage) I greeted him and his wife said that G this is not my maize but for the one with iron sheet house (Aisha) then we all laughed and I said that I didn’t ask you but I just greeted you. ["When Janneke will come she will ask a lot of questions about how much we harvested..." But is was their own maize]. When I reached at Suset’s house I didn't find anyone else then I turned back home. I continued knitting alone then at 4.00pm I saw Makuta coming back with my bike and she said that: thanks a lot I met him and he gave me 1000mk.

Later on I continued my journey to see my children at M. village and now am back. And bcoz she said that she is from Mudzi B then I asked her questions on (vragen Feb 2009 Mudzi B and Mudzi A paper)

Q1. she answered that when women suspect or know that their HB’s are not unfaithfull, most of them they just stay without asking the HB, they say that: if I will ask that means they will be angry and go to get married to another wife, later on it will be difficult to take care of the children vice-versa. According to a HB most of them they just divorce and get married to another wife without discussions.

Q2. She said that men and women do not stay together for their entire lives but often have
multiple partners throughout bcuz, they don’t love each other. Most of the men or women they only love each other soon after marriage or before giving birth, but after the first born child that’s when men go to other wives and women goes to another man but especially the one who is married bcuz he knows the responsibility - 2: they don’t trust each other for example a man can be chatting with a lot of women and a woman can be chatting with a lot of men. And it is difficult to trust each other they don’t believe that: either they are just friends or not and they think of having other partners instead of asking each other. I didn’t use a question paper then it was difficult to remember everything but Q5 she said that:

Concept of chikondi (love) means doing everything that your partner ask you to do for him/her. But if it is not necessary try to tell each other that: this is not true/bad/good but let’s do this. But if you don’t do what your friend ask that means you don’t love each other and if you don’t want to do it be free to say it to avoid quarrels (that’s chikondi). But I didn’t understand shapes doesn’t have/how it is valued then I didn’t continue.

Q11 land tenure system she said that is handed over when you want to get married or else when you are still young inorder to teach you how to work in the field so that you can grow crops for sale and buy what you want e.g growing tomatoes, cotton, maize. And children move out to live independently soon after puberty stage bcuz it’s the time when you are able to wash yourself even going for ganyu (casual labour) to buy soap or else you move out when you are about to get married inorder to prepare by buying plates, tins, cups etc.

Soon after this question Makuta said that: I am going back home now see you tomorrow and feel free to ask me anything, you are my friend (she left and promised to come the other day). Then no-one else came.

9 April Thursday.

In the morning when I waked up I saw Esnart going to harvest alone. Then son of Lovely came to sell maize 7kgs = 175mk. Then from there I went to fetch some water then at the borehole I met with Grace and Evelin they greeted me and said that: we are going to harvest (ganyu) in the field of dotta of Alma. And she has started buying maize at 30mk/kg but after that ganyu (casual labour) we will choose ourself. We always come back home around 11am but we have not yet finished harvesting in our fields. I asked Sofia separately if it is working about what she is writing and she told me that don’t worry everything is ok. If I will have a question I will come and ask, bcuz soon after ganyu I go back to my field and you cannot find me at home.

On the way back I saw Sofia harvesting and she told me that: I hope I will have only 2 ½ or 3 bags of maize and today I have bought ½ bag the money that my HB gave me yesterday. Then HB of Vanessa came to sell 9kg = 270 he said that please buy at 30mk per kg
bcoz dotta of Alma has started buying at 30mk bcoz you are buying at 25mk and she wants a lot of people to sell there and I said no problem bcoz now I have finished buying. Then chief Mudzi A came to sell 12kg = 370 at 30mk/kg, then he told me that now I am getting better I cheated my wife that I am not getting better bcoz I didn’t want to help her harvesting and I wanted to have a chance of coming to sell maize here, he laughed and continued her journey to see GVH.

Then Innocent sent Trinity to borrow scale then I went there to ask what she wanted to use it for and she answered that: my mother is the one who wanted it. Jasmine answered that: G we took 1000mk to GVH with Innocent & we promised to pay back a 50kg bag of maize, Livia 25kgs and I 25kgs and now she came saying that she wants her maize. Then Sofia called me separately and said that my HB will come to give me a bag of beans to ex-change with maize but Jasmine is not happy [bcoz her son is taking care of Sofia again. End may the son come to spent a night at Sofia’s house here in Mudzi B and Jasmine asked him how her daughter-in-law in Balaka is doing, that he should tell her to come and chat with Jasmine here, and even gave a basin of maize to be eating with his new wife. This shows that Jasmine likes his new wife says Getrude]. And yesterday Innocent went to S. village and her ex-HB gave her 1000mk to buy 50kg bag and she came back on a hired bike. She explained this to her parents and her father was not happy he asked Innocent why she is still in relationship with the man who gave a child but failing to take care. And now going at S. village secretly and received money for maize. Then her mother said that don’t buy the maize but buy food for the child. Sofia stopped talking bcoz Innocent was coming near by.

Then Tumanene came selling mandasi then Esnart was going to fetch some water then she asked Tumanene why she decided to start a BS and she said that I want to buy lotion and soap, then Esnart said that have you forgotten that your HB was angry when he heard that you have started a BS? She said that the problem is that most of women or boys who have cellphones used to tell HB’s in SA that your wife has started a BS that’s why most of the women used to be afraid e.g my HB (Tumanene) when he heard last yr that I have started a BS he was angry and told me to go back to my parents bcoz his friends were laughing saying that you are in SA, and if your wife is selling mandasi that means her friends or your friends will be laughing saying that you don’t send enough money.

Esnart and Tumanene laughed and then continued their journey. Then Tumanene, Kondwani joined me knitting and Amila came and she started saying that I have seen a new HB of Emra, she has now married to a certain man from Mangochi (everybody laughed) and said that she has seen that Ndaba will not help her.

Then Mr Langmwale came to give me the book that you asked and he told me in brief especially the head lines and he told me to go at Br. village to see what some women will do. They wanted to start learning how to cook different foods using a charcoal burner (mud stove)
but with less firewood and they chose only 10 women per village and I promised to go and see.

Then HB of Julia came to sell 30kgs of maize and I told him that I have finished buying and he continued to dotta of Alma and Kondwani said that: this family works hard in the field and they have harvested a lot of maize that’s why they are selling. Then Jane came and Kondwani asked her why she was chatting with HB of Vanessa alone at night and Jane answered that: his wife told me to ask him why nowadays he is not saying bye when he wants to go somewhere else. But soon after their marriage he was telling her where he was going, but the HB didn’t answer anything and I told him to start telling her wife where he is going (everybody laughed). Jane continued that even when my father and mother querell I used to tell them that its bad and they stop (the women were just laughing).

Then Tumanene started saying that am still afraid bcoz I didn’t tell my HB that I have started a BS bcoz last time he was angry, and in hunger season he sent only 4000mk for me to buy 1 bag of maize and when I asked extra money to buy 2 bags, he was angry and told me to go back to my parents and get married to a rich person who can manage to buy 2 bags at 8000mk. And all the women in Mudzi B were happy and laugh bcoz my HB chased mw. I know that they were laughing bcoz of jealousy, but later on he apologised and said that please my wife don’t go back to your parents. Then Kondwani answered that: my brother in SA is the one who used to tell the boys from this village not to querell with their wives here and even Eamart, my brother in SA is the one who told Ronan that forgive your wife and don’t chase her. But the best thing is that: you Tumanene tell your HB that: you have started a BS and Tumanene accepted.

Kondwani continued that: I have remembered that my HB was beating me bcoz I was just following him where he was going with his friends, I was jealousy that’s why I was following him everywhere (Tumanene laughed and said that: even my I was just following him everywhere and when he asked me this I said that Iwant to see what you will be doing bcoz we loved each other and there is no need for you to leave me alone here. (even Lovely said Kondwani) And bcoz of this sometimes failing to go where he was supposed to go (we all laughed) and Kondwani continued that my HB was giving me the whole money that he was keeping but the problem was that he was telling me to give him the money often but when coming back he was coming empty handed and that’s how I heard from my friends that he has a girlfriend, I was angry and stopped keeping the money and divorced. And Tumanene continued that even myself I was keeping the money that my HB was telling me to keep while other HBs they don’t give their wives money to keep bcoz they don’t trust each other even Lovely or Blessings they were saying that their HB were just buying anything on their own. And sometimes failing to eat bcoz of waiting for the HB to bring ndiwo (relish) (when coming back where they have gone).

Then dotta of Venesi came and Blessings to knit. Then Kondwani laughed and said that can you tell me the owner of this child? I am from this village but I don’t know where you got your child (she just laughed) and Blessings answered that: he is from this village and she told me herself that he gave her some money for soap (500mk) and he stays near her house. But I
TUMANENE continued that other women after querrelling with their HB they don’t go and sleep at the same bedroom but separately bcoz they know that at night a man can not manage to sleep alone (but that’s not a good idea! Said Tumanene) but with their wives and after querrelling inorder to forgive each other quickly its good not to sleep separately bcoz after being angry that means the HB can go to another wife (we all laughed). Then ESNART came to sell maize 10kgs = 300mk then the women laughed and said that she is selling maize as if her HB doesn’t send enough money then Blessings answered that may b e she just cheat her friend that my HB sent 10 thousand instead of 4 or 5 thousand (all women laughed). It was already 5:48 pm and every body went back home. GVH sent her dotta to beg sailt and I gave her.

10 April 2009, Friday.

In the morning when I waked up I saw chief Mudzi B + 3 children going to the field. When I went to the borehole I met with Emra and she told me that I want chipewa (hat) and will come with 3kgs of maize and said no problem. Then later on I saw chief Mudzi B carried full basket of g/nuts and her children full basin everybody, then Kondwani said that she has finished harvesting maize. Then now she is harvesting g/nuts. Then Elube passed by then Kondwani said that: she is going to attend a certain ceremony for the one who died at [nearest primary school] village. then Hamra was going to fetch some water, she greeted me and told me that I will come with 20kgs of maize to sell and I answered that sorry I stopped buying and she said ok, I will go and sell to the dota of Alma. Around 10 I went to check what Suset was writing and I passed Chikondi harvesting and she greeted me and said that: I’m still busy but I will tell you when I will be free and I said no problem. When I reached at Suset’s house I found her sleeping and she said that I am not getting better since that time and I have not yet started harvesting. I checked what she has been writing and I tried to remind her what she forget to write especially where she bought, but at least it was nice and I just encouraged her to work hard. Then her g.mother [Kima] called me and said that I have heard that you are buying maize and I said yes its true. And she continued that that’s good, but have you seen now! People have already forgotten the time that they were buying maize at 80-85/kg when they will sell cotton that means they will fail to buy maize bcoz it will be 50-60mk/kg and she continued that I am still harvesting may be I will finish next week (Suset looked ill and coughing). She continued that: are you going to continue moving around asking how much we have harvested? And I said no! she laughed and said that: I was thinking that you will start asking questions so that we can have extra soap and salt (we all laughed). Some 4 boys are also buying maize at [small crossroads market] 25mk per kg and at J. village 25mk/kg even at [nearest tradingcenter] people are buying and sell at Ntcheu, Dedza where they have not yet started harvesting from there I went back home and prepared my lunch.
Soon after lunch I started knitting then Kondwani and Wisikesi and Tumanene came to knit, as we were chatting new HB of Malita passed by then Kondwani said that G do you know that this man was the HB of mother of Naima and I said no! and she continued that the wife is the one who chased the HB when she started receiving some money from her son who is in SA bcoz that son belong to another HB and now he is married to Malita. But God cannot bless Mother of Naima bcoz they were staying together even in hunger season going for ganyu and now you can see that he is working in growing tomatoes.

Then Wisikesi said that am having my periods now and Kondwani answered that if your HB was here that means you could have put a piece of Red cloth or red mkanda (kind of cloth) to show him that you are menstruating bcoz most of the women are shy (not free to talk to their HB about this, that’s why old women came with this idea. And soon after finishing you put a white piece of cloth.

Then Sofia called me separately & she said that: Have you seen G, my grandmother gave 2000MK to Jane, and 2000MK to Kingsley, and the other 2 girls 1000 each, but she didn't give me anything. [J: Maybe received some money from SA? All these kids’parents are in SA... ] And I just told Sofia that don’t worry it happens. It was already 5:30 pm and everybody left.

In the morning when I waked up I went to fetch some water then GVH called me, when I went there she sais that: have you seen Getrude, I have harvested full nkhokwe (maize storage) and now am waiting for g/nuts, I have not yet started harvesting then. I just told her that continue working hard. Then she continued that everybody in the village will go to attend a campaign meeting at [small crossroads market] and I will go there bcoz I heard that group villages will receive a bicycle.

After this I continued my journey to the borehole. Then at the borehole I found some women (chitukuko) clearing at the place where they planted trees, then a certain man (fat) passed by. Then Pamela said that; this man was the second HB of chief Mudzi B he is going to see his child, they divorced but he used to come to stay 2-3 weeks only especially when he hears that: the brother of chief Mudzi B sent some money from SA, but now chief Mudzi B told him to stop coming. Any child that chief Mudzi B has belongs to different fathers. Then HB of Fatima passed by and Pamela said that this boy likes women, he is now in relationship with someone else from Kh. village he used to go there with Kingsley. Some women started coming to fetch some water and she stopped talking.

After breakfast I started knitting then Kingsley came to buy chipewa at 80mk then later on son of Kondwani came to buy chipewa 70mk (different pattern). Aroung 11am a certain
woman came to buy a small jersey at 300mk. And she said that she was from [nearest primary school]. I was happy bcoz people started buying.

Then dotta of Venesi came with a latter saying that: I must pay 300mk for the scale that I borrowed to use when buying maize then I gave her and said thanks a lot for borrowing me. [Scale was from concern universal to measure firewood to see fuel efficiency of mud stove. Mr Langmwale had told Getrude that she can be using it, but now Venesi asked 300mk for it]. Then Eveles sent some g/nuts in a big plate through her grand dotta and I said thanks a lot.

After lunch I started knitting and Esnart and Vanessa came and greeted me, and they said that: we are going to watch football but all the women from Mudzi B went to attend the campaign meeting at [small crossroads market]. I stayed alone up to dark hours, then GVH passed by around 7pm coming back from campaign with Lovely they greeted me and said that: the meeting started at 3:30pm but they cheated them to go at 9 am. I didn't receive a bike said GVH. Then Lovely said that: we will receive money tomorrow that president Bakili sent. And they continued their journey, but I failed to go at Sawli bcoz I heard on the radio that “be carefull this time! Don't force yourself to go and attend the meetings bcoz people used to querell and others fighting”.

In the morning when I waked up I went to fetch some water at the borehole. I met with Amila and a certain woman fetching some water, then the woman asked Amila that: where is your first born child? Then Amila answered that: he is still working at [large commercial estate] farm, I asked her what he is doing and she said that feeding sheeps. I asked how old is he? And he said I have forgotten but less than 15. when I reached home Tumanene came and she said that: I brought this potatoes but give me 20mk I want to buy painkillers for my dotta. Then I gave her and took the potatoes.

Later on Vanessa came she greeted me and said that: the money that I sold maize I bought this hair chemical and I want you to treat my hair but don’t tell anyone keep it secret bcoz up to now my HB didn’t know that I sold maize. Later on Lovely, Pamela passed by they greeted me and said that we are going to Chiyendausiku market to buy cloths and matemba, cloths for children. This is not hunger season said Pamela and laughed. I was still with Vanessa then Makuta came to greet me, she asked me to flash her HB in SA, I did it and the HB called after few minutes. After their discussions I asked her what her HB is doing in SA and she answered that: I have never asked him may be one day I will ask him, but just heard that HB of Chisoni works at a certain family cooking and Ronan at first he was just cleaning at the mosque but now he has stopped (we all laughed). He started another job now.
When Vanessa left, Blessings passed by then Makuta said that can you flash this number please, I want to talk to my boyfriend when she talked to him she started saying that I wanted to meet with him today, but am afraid to go alone. Afraid of what? People will know that I am in relationship with that man. Can you go with me G in the afternoon? I said no (my aim was to find out what they always discuss). Then she started saying that: do you know that second born of Blessings was mixed? And I said no. Makuta continued that: the HB of Blessings was in relationship with a certain woman and she has 2 kids from him and now when he came here in Malawi he went there and spent almost a week. She is now in Lilongwe and up to now he used to send some money to that woman. When Blessings heard this she started relationship with a certain man in Balaka, then on 24 Dec 2007 the man came at midnight and spent a night with Blessings and instead of going back earlier he went around 5am and some women saw him coming out of the house. That’s why she is now staying with her brother in the same house (her HB decided this). Then after that day 24 Dec her HB came on 28 Dec from SA, he just spent one night and went to Lilongwe to another wife and stayed a week there. After that week he now came back to Blessings and stayed 2 nights and went back to SA. After 2 months some women realised that Blessings was pregnant and people started gossiping that we will see the owner of the child, but lucky enough the child was similar to her HB and even the days were not different according to the time that he slept with her boyfriend and her HB (she laughed) and continued up to now the relationship is there.

Then Evelin came with the book to show me what she is writing and she said that: sorry I decided to come and show you bcoz when some women saw you coming at home they say that: you come to inorder to give me some money. I checked everything and it was nice then I encouraged her to work hard. Then she told me that I’m going for ganyu to the dotta of Alma (selecting maize, small and big interms of size) they want to make mgaíwa with small sized maize then she left and continued her journey, it was around 1:22pm.

At 2:30pm Kondwani came to knit then chief Mudzi B passed by then she greeted me. And I asked Kondwani why she didn’t greet her sister? Then Kondwani answered that: we querelled yesterday her ex-HB came yesterday and he spent a night with her. Then I told her that: have you forgotten that this man left when your child was few months old? And now you accepted when he asked to spend a night here? Why didn’t you chase him? May be you want another child, and bcoz of these words she stoppe
talking to me. Then a lot of children passed by and Kondwani said that: these kids are going to sell maize to dotta of Alma bcoz you G stopped buying.

Later on Rosemary passed by with a big stick in her hands and her 2 girls were infront of her. We asked her what was wrong, and she answered that these girls are stealing my maize that I harvested (the 2 girls carried everybody a small pot full of maize going to sell). Later on people will think that I am the one who is sending these young girls to sell maize, which is not good said Rosemary. Then Rosemary started beating her children and all the children cried loudly.

Then Lizzie passed by she greeted me and said that: sorry am busy that’s why I didn’t
come to knit last month and now am doing ganyu to the dotta of Alma, kutonola chimanga komanso kupeta chimanga (shelling and winnowing maize) . Am with Sofia and Grace even Hilda. But my HB is still here, he said that he will not go back to SA [J: good relationship? G doesn’t know why he now sells second hand cloths at [nearest tradingcenter]] and I told her that I will come one day to chat. Then Kondwani said that I am failing to go and sell my cotton bcoz vendors are buying at 35mk per kg and others 45mk per kg but when we planted the cotton they cheated us that they will buying at 100mk-150mk/kg. May be next month, that’s when people from Balaka will come to buy at a better price.

Then Makuta came for the second time and she told me that: sorry we will not go where I told you but may be on Tuesday and I said no problem. Then she started asking Kondwani that: is Evelin married now? And she said no. and I asked Makuta why she asked that question and she answered that: at the beginning she was in relationship with a certain boy and she was pregnant, and stopped school but the boy refused to marry her and later on after giving birth she married to a certain man from Mangochi but that man was married to a certain woman at Mangochi and it was difficult for Sofia to stay with him in Mangochi and Evelin was staying alone with her child [J: ooh, no, and I kept on asking why she never lived with the man she called HB… And G did not ‘protect’ Evelin and me by suggesting to me that he may have been married…]. Later on Evelin had a child from that HB and the HB stopped coming to see her. Then she started relationship with certain man and gave birth to a third child. When HB from Mangochi heard this, he was angry and stopped coming to see her. But the man didn’t marry her, then after a year, the ex-HB from Mangochi divorced with his wife there and he decided to go back to Evelin then he told Evelin to go and stay with him at Mangochi and Evelin accepted. The HB was working somewhere else but he liked women and later on he died then it was difficult now bcoz his relatives came to take all the properties and when she went to complain to the court that’s when they decided to give her 35 thousand bcoz she also have a child from him and with that money she built a house that she has and some livestock at that time and bought a blanket and cloths for herself and child. Kondwani laughed and said that: as of now she is still in relationship with HB of Elube..

Then Makuta asked Kondwani to escort her to buy tomatoes at the grocery then I continued knitting alone. At 4:50 pm I decided to go and see what Venesi was knitting, I found her chatting with her children. She greeted me and said that: am not getting better! Coughing and I saw that her maize was full nkhokwe. After few minutes I went back home.

Then Charity came to give the maize that she sold to me 1 bag = 1250 and Vanessa came she said that G please, I cheated my HB that I went somewhere else for ganyu and I found 200mk and bought chemical to treat my hair and Gertrude is my witness. And if he will come and ask you here just accept. I did this bcoz he now stopped giving me some money but just coming with matemba sometimes soap. That’s why I decided to sell maize and cheat him. We all laughed)
and she left, I continued knitting up to dark hours.

1645 13 April Monday.

In the morning when I waked up, I saw Vanessa going to the field with Kondwani, she greeted me and said that: I am going to pick cotton part of my field am afraid of the thieves, I asked her if she will start selling now and she said no! we will wait till the price will be higher. Then she continued her journey, when I started cleaning plates the ex-HB of Livia came. I greeted him and he started telling me that: I sent 1000mk to Livia to buy maize. I am also buying at [nearest trading center] but I decided to also send money to Livia inorder to help me bcoz she is my wife and we used to discuss about building a house now and I wanted to give her some money to start a BS of selling beans but before giving some money to start a BS I decided to give her money to buy 1 bag of maize inorder to see if she will manage to run a BS but now she just received the money but not buying maize, she is saying that: she gave you that 1000mk that’s why I am here I want my money and I told that sorry I don’t know anything about this story but I know that Livia took my money for a bag of maize but up to now she is not giving me. And lets go together and asked.

On the way back I met with GVH and she asked me where I found the maize and I said I am coming back from Phingi. Then GVH said that: I don’t understand her bcoz she is also keeping my 2 bags of maize and to Esnart 2 bags. Are they going to have food in hunger season? But the big problem is that: Phingi used to accept everything that Livia do, and do you know that she was in relationship with a certain man from [large commercial estate] and gave birth to Livia when the HB was away and I said I don’t know. She continued that by 1949 I was 9-10 years old before Phingi was born and it was in hunger season at that time our parents were making a big pit at a bedroom, then they were putting a very big clay pot in that pit and soon after harvesting they were filling that clay pot with a lot of maize. And in hunger season 1949 we were eating that food while parents of Phingi were going somewhere else very far to buy maize. Please take care don’t chat with them.

Then she continued going to her field to harvest g/nuts. Then Wisikesi came
to greet me, she asked me what I was discussing with her mother-in-law and I answered that we were just chatting. Then she continued that I am going to M. village, GVH send me to tell her HB that she will go this week Friday. She laughed and said that I have remembered one day before her HB died she stayed with me in my house but at night she went to mosque having sex there and now she told me to tell her new HB that: he need to find a place where to spend the night on Friday. We all laughed and she continued her journey.

Then I saw Esnart coming back from the field and she told me that she is now harvesting g/nuts. I asked her how much she harvested almost full nkhowke (maize storage) and she used nkhowke for blessings. most of the yrs Esnart used to harvest almost 2 full nkhowke and this year she has harvested 1 full nkhowke and she gave me the other nkhowke to keep my maize and its full now, you know that I have started cooking my own food and I bought a plastic basin, even new plates she smiled and continued her journey.

Later on Sofia called me, she asked me to escort her to make nsinjiro to chief Mudzi B, when we reached there we found chief Mudzi B cooking nsima and her dotta was making nsinjiro, (g.nuts flour), she greeted us and said that [chief Mudzi B:] I saw ex-HB of Livia near the borehole and Sofia said that yes! He wanted his money from Livia. Then chief Mudzi B said that Livia came one day here then she told me that: I will come one day with a visitor, I found a new HB now who want to marry me and now he wanted to pay 750mk but I don’t know what to do bcoz up to now my ex-HB is not telling me that we divorced then I told Livia that (said chief Mudzi B) if your new HB is serious then tell your ex-HB that lets go to the chief with your uncle to show everybody that we have now divorced. She accepted at that time but up to now its 2½ months, she is not telling me anything but the problem is that her mother used to help her to take care of her children that’s why she is having a lot of boyfriends.

Sofia added that as of now Phingi gave 20kgs of maize to her g.son to sell and find money for transport for him to go and start staying at Mangochi. And now Livia sent 5kgs for him to sell for her. On the way back GVH gave me 1500mk she told me to buy a bag of maize for her (why not buy herself? Was busy, wanted to go to son at J. village village, but people had already become used that they could sell maize at her house, so may still come to sell. didn’t want to give money to Kingsley bcoz he may steal some of it). When I reached home son of Chikondi came to sell 12kgs = 300MK & he said that: my father is the one who sent me to sell the maize. Then Venesi also came to sell 8kgs = 200mk. She said that she wanted to buy painkillers. Then I started knitting alone no-one else joined me, I didn’t know why they failed to come.

14 April Tuesday 2009.
In the morning when I waked up g.son of GVH Came to call me, he said that GVH is the one who sent him. When I reached there GVH said that this is my first born son. Father of Jane he is a very ill. I have tried some trad med but not helping, I have now decided to send him at Liwonde clinic [J: private hospital, thus perceived better. Why there, I asked G. Maybe bcoz he has money, she guessed] for check up and blood testing if he is positive, then its good for him to start ARVs, then I said that its a good idea & she continued that I want some money that I gave you to buy maize so that I can give him money for transport because he can not manage to go alone but Kingsley and Jane will go with him. and if he is positive then I will tell him to stay here so that I can be taking care of him. Then on the way back I saw Sofia harvesting G.nuts. she was chatting with Vanessa and Vanessa said that iam still picking cotton then HB of Thokozani passed by and Vanessa laughed and told Sofia that have you heard that he is now in relationship with Charity. I saw them yesterday going at [small crossroads market] together. He is saying that he want to marry her because Rosemary (his M. in-law) is bewitched her daughter that why he sent her back to her mother. Sofia laughed and said that I think Charity likes men, she is beautiful but being in relationship with that boy? And here its just near by! Why are they doing this. Then chief Mudzi B passed by she greeted me and said that iam going to start picking cotton at a certain field and [chief Mudzi B:] Livia came home yesterday and she told me to write a letter to her ex-HB to show that they must divorce now and I told her to come with her ex-HB and their uncles, ankhoswe (wit ness) as as witness to show that they are serious to divorce, iam doing this because the HB came last year to pay 500Mk and he came with his ankhoswe (witness for marriage) then now I cannot accept to give her that letter alone. Then she continued her journey to the field. Then Davie and Fatima came to sell maize they told me that they have been sent by g Mudzi B 30Kgs -240Mk Davie then 180Mk Fatima. Then a Daughter of Sofia came to sell 1 ½ and young sister of Dorica came to 2Kgs. Then around 11.20am I saw Vanessa and her HB carried a 50Kgs of cotton coming back from the field and Kondwani came back with 2 bags of 50Kgs of cotton with her first born so sn.

At 12.20 I saw son of GVH who went to the hospital coming back he came here to beg drinking water. I asked him if the doctors at Liwonde helped him and he said that they helped me I have paid 1500Mk. But they have given me a letter to go at Balaka and those doctors at Balaka will know what to do with me. And they also gave me some pain killers and injection but after testing my blood that’s when they asked me about a near by hospital and I said Balaka [probably HIV positive, bcoz letter for Balaka hospital, was treated for TB and received medicine to store at [nearest tradingcenter] and get them from there in stead of all the way to Balaka]. Then they told me to go there before Friday. After drinking water he went straight to GVH. Soon after lunch I saw Doris coming to sell maize 6Kgs -180Mk and found a chance of asking her what made her to get married then she said that I met with that boy at Mw. village but firstly I was staying with (Rashida young mother) and my mother died when I was only 7 months and Rashida is the one who was taking care of me up to October 2008 and her marriage ended. Later on she married a certain man who was bulding the house with mud only not bricks. and with her dota Monya we told her not to get married to that man bcoz he liked beer. Then after getting married to him, Rashida told me to start cooking my own food with my brother and she was saying that: you are rude, I have stopped taking care of you. Then bcoz of these words I told Rashida not to stay in the house that my father + mother built. From there I started moving around with men even boys inorder to find money for ndiwo, soap, lotion,
paraffin. I started this last year Feb and later on I now decided to get married to one of my boyfriend so that he can be helping me in some of the things like soap and working in the field. I asked Doris how old is she and she said 17. I failed to ask her a lot of questions bcoz tears started coming out of her eyes. But she just continued that: Rashida stayed with that HB 2 months and he went back to his wife. After these words she continued her journey to the borehole.

Later on HB of Filimona came to sell maize 10kgs =300mk - 30mk per kg. then on the radio I heard Bingu wa Mutharika saying that fertilizer will be sold at 500mk and he will try to make a lot of coupons.

At 3:50pm Kondwani and Wisikesi joined me knitting then Wisikesi said that: my mother-in-law (GVH) is receiving 3500mk now (salary for group village headship). Then Wisikesi continued that am just feeling cold often nowadays and I said that why can’t you just go for blood testing and she answered that I will go with my HB and Kondwani answered that I have never done for blood testing and I asked her why? And she said that I don’t want to know either am Pos or Neg, but if I am HIV N that means I will just be staying but not going for blood testing. If I will know that am Positive then I will be thin bcoz of thinking. And I encouraged her that you can start ARVs and she answered that how can I start ARVs while I don’t want to go for blood testing. I will be just staying waiting for death.

Dotta of Venesi joined us, as we were chatting I asked her who is the owner of her child then she answered that: Boris (in-law of Esnart) I was in relationship with him when I was at [nearest primary school] school, she didn’t continue explaining may be she was shy with dotta-in-law of GVH. but she just said that I am going home and I said that sorry may be I didn’t ask you a good question. When she left Wisikesi (DIL of GVH) said that the face of the son is not similar with Boris but I heard that she was in relationship with the one who is a thief (related to Sweetness) but the problem is that Just soon when she started menstrual she was in relationship with a lot of boys and it was difficult for her to mention the one who impregnated her. Latter on I saw wife of Boris passing by going to the bore hole and the women said that at least Boris is married rather than just moving around with different girls. Then three boys passed by and Chikondi said that : these are the boys who are in relationship with g.dotta’s of g. Mudzi B std 4 girls yesterday when I was coming back from the grocery I met with these boys together with the girls and Kondwani answered that I tried to tell GVH about the behaviour that these girls are doing but she was just quite she didn’t even say that she will talk to them. Even in the morning GVH is the one who wakes up earlier sweeping every where but not those girls sweeping.

After few minutes at 5:10 pm all the women left they said that its cold now, Its good to go home and cook earlier and Kondwani said that atleast in the morning we are eating sweet potatoes or pumpkins or porridge but lunch and dinner we are now eating nsima with either pumpkin leaves, nseula, thelere .(okra). I failed to use a voice recorder because the women liked to sit at the
In the morning when I waked up I went to fetch some water then I found Hilda fetching some water, but the other women were clearing at the tree field while they were clearing they were discussing that they must share the potatoes (planted at woodlot, own initiative, not part of projects) now because people can start stealing. Like what happened last year. But Kondwani complained that yesterday we discussed with Chief Mudzi B about the potatoes and she accepted but when she went to explain this to Venesi she said, why sharing this time? Just do what you want but if Mr. Langmwale ask me, that means I will tell him to ask you. Kondwani continued saying that this is not good, she is talking like this because she is the one who is looking after these trees. Some women said that let’s go and complain to GVH about what Venesi is saying and everybody accepted.

On the way back I met with Mr. Ntawanga and his wife going to harvest g/nuts. I started knitting alone alone then Sofia passed by and she said that today there is a campaign meeting under the big tree, someone else will come from Balaka.

Then I saw Esnart coming back from the field with a basin full of g/nuts. Later on some two girls passed by with ½ bag everybody to sell at [small crossroads market]. After lunch I was knitting alone then I heard the sound of a car, then some women from Mudzi B and other villages started singing and dancing. Then I runned to see what was happening then it was a woman for campaign under Bakili Muluzi, then at the meeting she encouraged people to vote for Bakili and while talking she distributed salt (what did people say about this? Just accept the salt, we didn’t ask for it. Can just receive it and we will think for ourselves who to vote for. Bingu distributed T-shirts others zitenje. Some chiefs in other villages received bicycles from Bingu). To everybody about 250gr & I also received & I heard Sofia telling Kondwani that Kingsley has already harvested 10 bags of cotton (50kg). Wisikesi & Kondwani were discussing that Friday GVH will go at M. village to see her HB but she wish she could spend a night there (they laughed and shaked hands). Two women (K + W) continued that I think GVH accepted the relationship bcoz she wanted money from him, you know that man has a lot of livestock, you can also see that her HB who died left a lot of money, her children from SA sent a lot of money but she still want a HB. She has her own grandchildren who can make a toilet, a fence than me (said Kondwani) I don’t have a toilet now even a bathroom there is no-one else who can do it for me unless if I have money to pay. Then Wisikesi told her that: why can’t you just get married and she answered that sindikufuna (I dont want) (doesn’t want bcoz first HB was just moving around with different women), at 4:00 pm I went back home bcoz at [small crossroads market], Lovely said that after the meeting people started fighting. At 4:30 am I saw the car going and people continued dancing. I continued knitting alone and no-one else joined me I hope they were tired singing and dancing.
In the morning when I waked up I saw 2 boys coming to sell maize (new faces) 10kgs = 300mk and 9kgs = 270mk, then Hamra came and she told me that she will come to sell 25kgs and I said no problem.

At 8:00am I prepared my journey to Balaka standard Bank to withdraw some money. At Balaka I withdrawed 24 thousand because I used money for research (borrowed) and I wanted to pay back then at Balaka I bought actellic 1 bottle 400mk at Agora, and 10 empty bags at 800mk, then I went at the filling station to buy paraffin. Then Teleza gave me 1500mk to buy TNM cellphone, I tried to move around everywhere but I didn’t find. When I reached home I gave back Teleza her money and she said that I will send anyone else any day to check. I failed to ask her where she got the money ( she was just angry I don’t know what was wrong). I reached home at 1:10 pm then Sofia came to greet me and she said that let’s go home and see what my HB gave me, he came yesterday. When I reached there I saw a big basin full of beans and she said that the HB told her to exchange those beans with maize. 1 medium plate beans and 3 medium plates full of maize. He also gave her soap 10 bars, salt and 200MK. Then Livia greeted she was making kanyenya with matemba (dried fish fried in wheat flour coating) and asked her if she has started a BS and she said that it was for her mother.

When I went back home I found Tumanene sitting on the veranda she asked me to teach her how to make bread and I explained every thing to her. An she said that I don’t know what BS I can do because I started kanyenya and Livia’s mother has started the same BS. Jane has started zitumbuwa (maize flour pan cakes). Then I saw son of Ntawanga coming to sell maize I asked him, who is the owner of the maize and he said that my parents sent me 19kgs=570MK. Later on I saw a group of young boys and girls coming to sell maize, Kondwani was passing by and said that a lot of girls are still coming to sell maize just stop knitting for today so that you can buy maize properly.

Dorica came with 14 kgs =420MK she said that she is just keeping the money inorder to buy clothes and soap. Litta 7 yrs girl 3 kgs=90MK, Dorica’s young sister 6kgs=180MK, dotta of Evelin 4kgs=120MK, Stella 8yrs girl 2kg=60MK, Victoria 8kgs=240MK, dotta of Venesi 5kgs=150MK, son of Haliday 6kgs=180MK, 10kgs (new face)=300MK, Chikondi 15kgs=450MK, g. dotta of GVH 6kgs=180MK, son of Amila 3kgs=90MK, dotta of Tumanene 1kg=30MK [Son of Amila later passed by with sweets. These were probably the kids collecting maize that was left behind fields].

Then Lovely came to see what I was knitting and she said that it’s good to have a toilet I asked her why she said these words and she answered that I saw Kondwani going in the bush to help herself because she don’t have a toilet (we all laughed) the she said that I will come to see
you later I want to see Elube. Then around 5 pm Wisikesi and Kondwani + Sofia came to greet me. Then Kondwani said that Gertrude, we were angry today we didn’t want to come and knit because this one (pointing at Wisikesi) was saying that women from Mudzi B don’t know how to wash their bodies properly and we were angry because she added that we produce a bad smell. When we are knitting but you know G it’s difficult to find soap while this woman has HB in SA. Then Wisikesi said that I say the truth only? You can wash your bodies even without soap if you don’t have, or just go for ganyu to find what you want (Kondwani, Vanessa, Sofia were angry and said that ) we will come to knit when we will wash our bodies. Whe the women left Wisikesi came separately and said to me that sorry G But I was saying the truth, I want to teach these women to take care of their bodies, because may be some HB used to run away because of bad smell.

After these words she went back. At knight I started calculating how much money I spent to buy maize and it was

1669 G/nuts 1500 (from Wisikesi)

1670 Maize 9 bags (13,155 MK)

1671 Empty bags 10=800MK (80MK each)

1672 Actellic 1 bottle 400MK

1673 Lent scale 300 MK

1674 Second hand cloth 3,800 MK (Balaka)

1675 Total 18,455 MK

My aim was to sell some of the maize at a high price in December -January in Lilongwe not for food only. 4 bags of maize for food and extra for sale.

17 April 2009 Friday

In the morning when I waked up, I went to fetch some water then I met with Grace coming back from the field carried 3 pumpkins and she gave me 1 pumpkin. Still at the bore hole I
found Emra, Sofia, Blessings, Rashida washing their clothes, they said that we are preparing for the mosque.

Then I met with Kingsley coming back from the field and he was talking to his friend that I have already picked 9 ½ bags of cotton but this is just the beginning. On the way back I met with Sofia she greeted me and said that I have remained with 3 pages I need another book and I said no problem. The at home Phingi and Livia came with a bag of maize and they told me that we want to borrow a scale to see if it is 50kgs, we want to give back to GVH, then I helped them and Sofia came she said that I want to go at [nearest tradingcenter] to buy a mat, I begged the money to my HB! Can you go with me and I said no problem I can go with you. And she said that he gave me 500MK. Then she continued that people have already started coming to exchange beans with maize. I asked whom? And she answered me that mother of Dorica brought 6 plates of maize and she gave her 3 small plates of beans, GVH 8 plates of maize then 4 small plates of beans.

Later on Fatima passed by going to fetch some water, I asked her why she is in this village and she answered that I came to see my mother in law (she just laughed) and I failed to ask her a lot of questions because I was with Sofia. Then Sofia said that I am going to coock pumpkins first, I escorted her and it was around 10:05 am but I found Jasmine and her family eating msima.

Then GVH came, she greeted me and said that today Friday around 4 pm I will go at M. village to my daughter in law’s uncle. I want to find some traditional medicines but I will come tomorrow morning. Then I said no problem I am still here (I knew that she was going to meet with her new HB).

Later on I saw chief Mudzi B passing by she greeted me and said that ndinapita ku dimba (I went to the garden) and I am coming back now, I want to grow tomatoes there in order to sell in June. She carried a plate full of beans and she said that I bought to Sofia and I asked her that you didn’t exchange with maize? And said yes but I gave her 500mk and that money she will buy maize. Then I started escorting chief Mudzi B and at the tap I saw Ada, Modesta, Tinenenji, Dorica, Ellesi, playing cards. I stopped inorder to see the way they do it. And they were contributing maize, but the one who won was taking the maize that was contributed.

Sofia didn’t go at [nearest tradingcenter] then I went alone by bike. And Livia told me to buy underwears she gave me 200mk and she said that: please don’t tell my mother that I sent you to buy underwears for me. I sold my maize to someone else. Then she continued that my father is buying maize and now Emra is selling ½ bag at 700mk and my father told me to go and buy for him.

On the way to [nearest tradingcenter] I met with a lot of young girls and boys going at [nearest tradingcenter] (why?). when I
reached there, I saw a lot of people buying and selling especially second hand cloths, almost 30 young women selling zigumu (maize flour cakes), mandasi, bananas, g/nuts, (no-one selling dried maize). I went direct to greet women selling fish, and they told me that at least now it is working a lot of people buying matemba and usipa (dry fish and small dry fish). Then young girls aged 11-12 almost 8 were selling mandasi in total they were 38 women including those 8 young girls but all the restaurant were closed I don’t know why. Young girls and boys buying cloths, underwears, mandasi, kanyenya. No woman selling tomatoes I asked a certain woman who was selling g/nuts and she said that it was now difficult to find tomatoes and no woman selling vegetables. Indeed a lot of people gathered around 4:45pm and at 5:25 I started my journey back home. On the way back I met with Ntawanga carried matemba (dry fish), Tulipesi carried matemba. All the women whom we interviewed were still selling matemba but women selling other merchandise were new faces to me. All the women selling tomatoes were not there. Only one man was buying cotton at 55mk per kg. and I bought 3 underwears for Livia at 60 each (new not second hand). For second hand they were selling at 25 each.

18 April Saturday

In the morning when I waked up, I saw Livia going to fetch some water then she came to greet me. Then as we were chatting I asked her how it is going on with her new HB and Livia said that: I went to Balaka one day and his friends told me that he has another wife and not yet divorced that’s why he is failing to marry me. Then its good for me to stop thinking about him when I asked him, if it id true that he is married he answered am not married, if someone else told you! That means he is jealousy of our love affair. And now I have told him that am no longer his girlfriend andhe is saying that, he will not stop loving me but his aim is to marry me.

Then Tumanene came, and Livia continued her journey to the borehole. Then Tumanene said that when I sold kanyenya I went to buy hair chemical at [nearest trading center] and I applied myself but now I want you to give me the oil that you apply in your hair only for today. Then I gave her her (20mk hair chemical). Then she continued that, am now selling potatoes if you want you can buy! Then I said sorry I will buy later as of now I have some. Then Hamra came to sell maize for 200mk ½ pail and I said that sorry I hav stopped buying and she answered that ok I will just go and exchange with beans to Sofia. then later on a certain man not from this 2 villages came to sell full bags 50kgs and I said sorry I have stopped buying.

At 8:30 I prepared my journey to church and at 9:30 I departed. On the way I saw Florence + her HB harvesting cotton. Then I saw Chikondi + her son harvesting cotton. Alida was still harvesting maize, then I met with Doris, she greeted me and asked if I am still buying maize and I said no I have stopped and she continued that I wanted to find transport, I want to go at Mw. village with my HB to see his parents. Then I will just go and sell at J. village but they are buying at 20mk the other one 24mk per kg but we wanted you bcoz you were buying at 30mk. (I passed by Jasmine cooking nsima around 9:35am) when I reached at church they asked me
to take part in singing and I did it.

Then at the end chief of B. village congratulated some people at the church that they are now coming in time. And they contributed a lot of money almost 18omk to see someone else who was ill and one of the women said that: this is not hunger season and we are happy.

After lunch I started knitting then Kondwani, Vanessa and Wisikesi who came to learn how to send a text to her HB joined me as we were chatting. Ada + Tinenenji + mother of Dorica passed by going to sell maize to HB of Jasmine for himself (Innocence bought for brother) full medium pot everybody. Florence was passing by going to fetch some water, she stopped and greeted the women then a certain man came to sell maize and I said sorry I have stopped then Florence said that after selling cotton am planning to buy [maize] but the problem is that the price will be higher at that time, as of now people have not yet started selling but next month. Then Kondwani started saying that Holy is buying at 25mk per kg that’s why a lot of people are bringing their maize here.

Then Wisikesi said that a certain boy 14yrs from catholic church has now started going to muslim he said that he has done this because he want circumcision he heard on the radio that it helps to prevent HIV AIDS and she continued that but I am getting worried my dotta who is now 13yrs is in relationship with him, when I told her that: its bad she answered that inunso munayamba chonco musanakwatirane ndi bamboo anga (meaning you also started with this before getting married with my father, then Kondwani answered that: even g. dotta’s of GVH have got their boyfriend and they answer the same words. But they have started this bcoz young boys have got money after selling maize.

Then Livia called me separately and showed me the letter that her boyfriend wrote and it said that Livia: ine ndilibe mkazi, iweyo ndimakukonda ndipo ndidzakukwatira (I don’t have a wife, I love you and I want to marry you) , I am failing to marry you now bcoz am busy with something (I love you more than a cup of milk (these words were written in English and laughed). Then Livia said that aunt G we will discuss later bcoz you are busy with these women. Then the women started saying that as of now from 20th April they will open a youth club (Edzi Toto) at [clinic] village hospital and young boys and girls will be going there to play football, netball and a lot of girls are happy and Kondwani said that which girls? Because in this village only few girls are not married but may be from other villages. (the day that I went to Balaka, I saw some boys and girls gathered, but I didn’t know what was happening. Then Livia went to fetch some water and she said that its for my house, I have hired someone to build a house for me and I have already paid 200 MK. I failed to ask a lot of questions because the women were still knitting.

Then Jane passed by with the HB of Vanessa and Kondwani said that this is not good I saw them around 2 pm sitting together on the same mat while Vanessa was at the bore hole. When Vanessa came here to knit, they were still chatting and now Vanessa has gone
back home and Jane + HB of Vanesa are together going to the cotton field, everybody was quite

Pamela came to greet me around 5:30 pm and Kondwani said that I saw your ex-HB (the owner of the child coming there) and Pamela said that he went to my sister but I don’t know what he is looking for (all the women laughed) at 5:40 pm everybody left. Then Makuta from B. village came to greet me and she said that I am coming back from [small crossroads market] my boyfriend called me and we met in a certain house for his friend because his friend went to Mangochi and we were free to chat. My HB from SA called me and he said he will come back from SA now and it’s good for me to be chatting with my b.f. for the last time. When I will be pregnant that means it will be like my HB is the one who impregnated me. Then I saw Grace passing by with in law of Esnart but he is now married. After few minutes d. in law of g left. I failed to use a voice recorder because all the women said that we want to sit here not there so that we can see people passing by.

19 April, 2009

In the morning when I waked up I went to borrow a big mat to Jasmine to dry my maize ready to apply actellic then I found them eating porriadge while Sofia was cooking sweet potatoes. Later on Chikondi came to give me sweet potatoes. Then Makuta came to greet me and asked her if she use a condom when she went to meet with her boyfriend and she said that no! we didn’t, and no one else asked about it. And about blood testing she also answered that I will go with my HB.

Later on at 11 am I went to see if Evelin has finished writing the first note book then on the way I saw Ada cooking nsima and Tinenenji, Evelin, Dorica playing cards by contributing maize (njuga) (gambling). Then I called Evelin separately and asked if she has finished and she said no! but on 21st April then I asked how much she harvested and she said come and see, [Evelin:] I have decided to make a simple nkhokwe in one of the bed rooms and it was full then after few minutes Boris came with a scale, I asked him what was happening and he said that: I am going to everybody who took some money last year for a 50kg bag. And Evelin is included (indeed I saw a bag of maize separately at the corner of her house. Boris continued that: Jasmine 2000MK/bag I was thinking that they will just bring the maize on their own but they didn’t, thus why I decided to move around. From there he said that I am going to Pamela. Then I continued my journey back home. Then Livia came and she told me that Aunt G. I bring that letter this afternoon so that you can translate for me, there is a certain sentence written in English and I said no problem. Then I asked her [Livia] how much money is she going to get the money and then, answered that: I will tell you later, as of now I am busy fetching some
Later on I went to Sunset to give her another note book and I found 4 women drinking beer & then Sunset gave me the notebook & I gave her a new note book( but she was still ill). On the way back I met with GVH She greeted me and said that: I am coming back now since that day. But my son (father of Jane) is still ill and I asked her if he went at Balaka hospital as the doctor from Liwonde said. And she said no! he refused to go. Then she continued her journey. No one else came to knit, I don’t know what happened. The around 4 I started packing the maize, then Kingsley came to help me and he said that: tomorrow morning I will help you applying actellic.(I waited for Livia to bring the letter but she didn’t.

20 April 2009 Monday

In the morning when I waked up Livia came to greet me and she said that: I want you Aunt G to translate the words that my boyfriend wrote, then I translated for her and Sofia started laughing and Livia was happy and she said that OK! That means he loves me! And I said that’s what the letter says. Then Livia burned it and she said that maybe my mother can find it and start reading. Then I asked Livia where she is going to get the money to pay the one who is building a house for her and she said I will pay them soon after selling cotton. Then Sofia said that I am going to the maize mill to make ufa woyera (white maize flour). Then Livia went to the bore hole to fetch some water for building her house with Fatima. Then I saw Teleza and Elube going at the bore hole to wash their clothes. Later on Livia came to give me some thobwa. (gruel)

After breakfast I started knitting then I saw Julia coming back from the bore hole to wash her clothes. Then after lunch Kondwani joined me knitting and she said that: sorry aunt G I didn’t come earlier because I was busy pounding maize you know that this is not hunger season to eat mgaiwa (maize flour), but everybody is now eating ufa woyera (white maize flour), but this lunch I just ate potatoes because I didn’t want to eat mgaiwa, but in the morning I ate porridge. [J: but just said everybody is now eating ufa woyera instead of mgaiwa - previous page? Was now used to ufa woyera but now finished]. [Kondwani: ] Aunt G did you hear that your friend Livia was preg? She went at K. village to a certain woman to ask Traditional medicine to abort, then the T-d told her that she don’t have that medicine but she had some medicine to make the foetus grow. Then Kondwani continued that Pamela is in relationship with HB of Esnart and I asked her why she is doing this! And she answered that: he proposed me that’s I am in relationship with him. I want to use soap from SA now. And now she bought new slippers at 350 MK (Balaka) said Kondwani. Thats why she is failing to get married. [Pamela doesn’t do anything, no BS, but can buy very expensive slippers definitely has some boy friends giving her money.] The Livia joined us for few minutes and Kondwani asked her if the ex HB father of Hana is still coming and she said no! he stopped coming, but do you know that am the fourth wife and we all said no! We don’t know. Livia continued that as of now he is still saying that I am his wife but I don’t want because he cheated me that he will
give me beans for sale (Kondwani laughed) and Livia said that I am busy fetching water for my house, I will come later to continue chatting.

The Florence passed by and she told Kondwani that I bought hair chemical yesterday I want to have long hair like G and I will come tomorrow here and I said no problem you can. Then Kondwani said that Hamra has now started selling tomatoes even HB of Julia he is now selling tomatoes, salt and dried fish. Built small counter in front of their house. Then around 5 pm I escorted Kondwani to buy tomatoes to Julia and she bought for 20MK and I saw that Julia harvested full big nkhoche and extra 50kg bag of maize in her house.

On the way back I asked Kondwani how much she harvested and she just said that pang’ono. The we passed by Sofia busy selling and exchanging beans with maize and she said that Aunt G I have found 1 ½ 50kg bag of maize but the beans are stil ¼ basin and those who bought beans with money not maize are few and I am buying maize a very small plate at 20MK. And I am happy ! Then Sofia said that atleast my HB is now loving me: Masiku ano bala amuna anga akundikonda komanso akundipatsa zomwe ndikufuna, and providing everything that I want( we laughed and shaked hands). It was already 6 pm and I went back home.

Early in the morning I went to fetch some water then I met with dotta-in-law of GVH (Wisikesi) and she greeted me and said that: GVH wants to send Jane to buy a new cellphone for her!, her new HB gave her some money the day that she spent a night there we all laughed and stopped talking because some women came near by and she just told me that: I will come later and we will talk more. Indeed at 8:45 she came and she said that: my HB in SA called me this morning. He said that: he sent 25 thousand last Sunday for transport and he said that I must go as soon as possible in SA before 28 April and I am happy bcoz its now close to 2yrs since he left. But I will not tell my mother-in-law right now because am afraid that she can bewitch me and I can fail to go, but will just tell her that I am going in Blantyre and when I will be in SA that’s the time that I will tell her the truth.

And she continued that some women are busy pounding maize for the 40 days ceremony of the mother of Auleria. Then Ellesi passed by and Wisikesi said that Gertrude do you know that this girl has a boyfriend in SA and I said I don’t know and she continued that her mother is the one who told her to end the relationship with Kingsley because they belong at the same village. then Julia passed by carried a 50kg bag with maize cobs I asked her where she was going and she answered that: at the mosque we used to contribute what we have harvested either maize or nandolo or mney. Everybody in the village will contribute, when there will be a funeral that means they will just use that maize. Then she continued her journey.

At 10am Jane came and she told me that dotta-in-law of Hamra has died (Filimona) she
just said that I am just having fevers then she went at [nearest trading center] hospital then now she has died. But the ceremony (burial) will be tomorrow. Later on I asked Grace who has died and she said that not Filimona but dotta-in-law of Hamra who was staying at J. village and the burial will be at [nearest primary school]. Then I asked her [Grace] if she has finished harvesting and she said yes. How many bags? She just laughed and said that aunt G I will tell you later.

Then Naima came selling tomatoes I asked her who is the owner of the business and she said that I just discussed with my HB to start this BS its for me and my HB. I bought for 20mk and she continued her journey moving around selling.

Later on Jane came for the second time with a certain boy. I asked her who is the boy? And she answered that he is my boyfriend we met yesterday at Mudzi B playground, and he proposed me then I accepted and she answered that he is a radio repair and it will not be difficult for him to provide money for soap. (Jane laughed) he stays at M. village and he comes in this village to play football with his friends. Then they continued their journey to the grocery. Then Innocence came and I started asking her if people at the maize mill leave madea, and she said that some of them they take when going home while others, they decide to leave at the maize mill. Then Innocence continued that did you heard aunt G that yesterday Emra was querelling with Fissa because of goats and I said no! the goats of Fissa were destroying cotton in the field of Emra (4 goats) then Esnart told Fissa that please! Take your goats out of my field if not that means you will pay 500mk per goat (that’s what the chief said) and Fissa said that I can't do that, if you want some money just sell one of your goats and Esnart started crying and went direct to chief Mudzi B to explain what was happening. Then GVH said that don’t cry we will talk tomorrow (then she left) in the afternoon I just saw Chikondi going to wash her clothes at the borehole. No-one else came to knit, I hope they went at the funeral.

22 April 2009 Wednesday

In the morning when I waked up I started cleaning the plates then Amila came and she said that I am selling firewood and I told her that sorry I don’t have money and she continued that I started a BS of selling zitumbuwa (maize flour pan cakes). I asked her where she got the money and she answered that I borrowed to Loveness 200mk and I made zitumbuwa with bananas and sold 420mk and now Lovely came asking for her money that’s why I decided to come and sell firewood.

Then chief Mudzi B came and said that Aunt G I want to borrow a bicycle my son wants to go at Balaka to buy cloths he sold maize and he has money and I said no problem he can take it. Then Amila + chief Mudzi B continued their journey. Later on Jane came and she started saying that I met with Grace she was with a certain big man, she said that he want to marry her although he has another wife, but Grace accepted.
Later on a certain boy came by bicycle with a certain man. They greeted me and asked the house of Gvh and I showed them. Then I saw Wisikesi coming saying that HB of Blessings has sent a big radio, extra blankets, zitenje, bicycle. Then Gvh started saying that my sons in SA are the ones who sent these things but not for Blessings. Then Gvh hired a bicycle running to Mz. village to ask the driver who brought those things. Then people started laughing saying that Gvh was told not to go there but its for Blessings [what happened exactly? items were for Blessings, but Gvh didn’t want to believe, was told not to go because was for Blessings, but went anyway. Everybody laughed at her] then the rain started from 1-2pm, some women went to attend the funeral at [nearest primary school} but failed to go because of the rain. No-one else came to knit but at 4pm. I just saw Gvh coming complaining to me that; have you seen G people in this village hate me they are saying that I am a thief and they even said that I have got sons who are staying in SA and they have wives here, but am the one who run to receive some of the things that they send and I told her that don’t worry just forgive them. Some women didn’t come to knit because of the rain and some went to the funeral.

23 April 2009 Thursday

In the morning when I waked up Kingsley told me that he want to start selling his sweet potatoes and indeed I saw Venesi buying for 30mk. Chief Mudzi B 50mk. At 8pm I saw Jane coming with a plate of nsima and I asked her why she is eating nsima in the morning and she answered that this is not hunger season that’s why I am eating nsima. Then after breakfast I prepared my journey to go to Sofia to take a note book that she finished writing.

On the way I met Gvh and she started saying that the rain that came yesterday will destroy cotton but it will help the pigeon pea to grow properly and she continued that ndikudwara m’imba and iam going to buy painkillers. Then I continued my journey to Evelin. Then I saw Chief Mudzi B eating potatoes with their children. Then Ada was also eating potatoes with her father, I found Evelin cleaning plates I greeted her she said thanks a lot for your visit I have finished that note book. Then I continued my journey to greet Pamela and I asked her if her brother gives her enough support and she that: not really, but he just sent that money for fertiliser up to now, and as of now I find money through ganyu (casual labour). Then I asked her that: as of now ther is no ganyu whey do get some money? She just laughed and said that, aunt G. I cannot manage to answ. Still on the way I saw Livia sitting on veranda of the house of Grace with acertain boy (Rasta man) he was selling beans while Grace was chatting with Pamela, on the way back, I met with Livia coming from Grace house, we greeted each other and I asked her about that Rasta man and she answered that he is my friend. I laughed and said that Livia your cheating me this man came when I was knitting one day and he told that he is your HB (I was cheating her) and Livia answered that its true he wants to marry me and he stays at [nearest tradingcenter], he has a grocery there! And another grocery at Zomba and he is the one who wants to give me money to start a BS of selling beans, I told mother and she said no problem.
[J: Why this time she told her mother quickly while she waited long to tell about the boy friend from Balaka? But Livia didn’t tell mother, G checked. Phingi disapproved of the boy when G told her about him: likes smoking, stealing, his behaviour is not good.]. I can get married to this man because he is also related to (a friend of my mother) [The same friend who proposed other potential HB earlier. Livia thought that this would make mother happy.] (continued in book 4).

I asked her if he was the man that the friend of her mother searched for her and she said that no! this is another new man and he is a real brother of that woman and he says I will be selling at 1 of his shop in Zomba. Then I continued my journey back home. At home my phone started ringing (new number) I answered and I heard a voice of a certain man saying I want to talk to Livia, I would like to know if she will come today at Balaka and I said that must call after 5-10 minutes so that you can talk to her. Then I runned and gave a cell phone to Livia. I found Livia harvesting groundnuts, I flashed then a boy called and Livia started asking him that: when are you going to bring those fish, so that I can start exchanging with maize. I am waiting for you. After talking I asked them who is that boy and she said that some one else at Balaka but not China, I laughed and I said that Livia After aborting you said you have stopped and now you are just having more boy-friends than before and Livia answered that Aunt G we will talk later. Then I went back home. Then Esnart passed by I greeted her and she said that I am going to borrow a mortar I want to make ufa woyera, I am now staying with my youngest in-law in the house my HB is the one who said. Then GVH came to beg sugar then I just gave her half cup.

Then I saw Livia bringing a plate of g/nuts and I said thanks a lot, then I escorted her, on the way she started telling me that: on Monday I want to start picking cotton then Wednesday my new HB (Rasta (has a lot of cotton, stays at K. village) told me to go and help him picking his cotton. He has almost 2 acres of cotton. Then I found Phingi coughing and I greeted her and said that are you still ill? And she said yes! Even my grand-son told me the words that you said. He told me to go for blood testing and I said that: when are you going to go? Am free to go with you and she said I will tell you! Then Livia laughed and said that: Maybe you are afraid? And she answered that: Am coughing often and I think its Tuberculosis or Aids because am the one who helps everybody in this village when she wants to give birth apart from that: am also included in the women who wash dead bodies we all laughed and I found Suset there! And Livia continued that Aunt tell even Suset and Sofi to go for blood testing and Suset said that: I already went at clinic hospital and am negative I can not go there. Jasmine looked at me (She probably knows/suspects Suset is actually positive. She is the one who said Suset (and Teleza) moved around with a lot of men (also teachers) when still at school) and we all laughed. I left them cooking nsima (ufa woyera).

Then HB of Naima came to buy chipewa 70mk and he [HB of Naima] said that: I am going to buy tomatoes at Nk. village for sale and I asked him [HB of Naima] why he is not thinking of going to South Africa and he said that: I planned to go last year but my wife was pregnant and am planning to go in October and he continued that some people in Mudzi A fail to go there because they don’t have brothers, cousins or friends in South Africa and some men in Mudzi B are in South Africa because they are relatives and for transport or passport its easy they help each other but in Chisakiko they wait to grow cotton to have passport, then second year growing cotton to find money for transport that’s why it take long. Then he continued his journey to buy tomatoes for
sale. Then Emra passed by with a big basin full of groundnuts she went to harvest.

At 3:45 pm I went at [small crossroads market] (Market Day) then I just found 1 woman selling tomatoes and 2 women selling sweet potatoes and only one man selling second hand cloths. And a lot of young boys and girls were just moving around. Then I saw Maria selling at the shop and she said that the owner of the shop at [nearest trading center] he has also another shop at [small crossroads market]. Then 1 woman was also selling paraffin, a young girl was also selling matemba. After few minutes I just went back home.

24 April 2009 Friday

At night around 8 pm HB of Sofia called and he said that: go and tell my wife that am coming and I will spend a night there! Then I said no problem I will go. When I reached there: I told Sofia that: you HB is coming and Sofia said that Aunt G you are cheating me! Then I said no! Its true then I went back home. Early in the morning Kingsley told me that I am going to the hospital with my young father who is ill, At first he refused to go, but now he told me himself that: I must escort him there. Sofia came and she started laughing and said that Aunt G, You didn’t cheat me” he came and he has gone this morning. He gave me 500mk to buy soap. Then I saw Elube going at the borehole to wash her clothes. Later I saw Fatima fetching water’ I asked her why she is here and she said that: Aunt G I will tell you later but I just came this morning and I will go back in the afternoon. At lunch Sofia passed by she greeted me and said that: I am going to Thokozani she sent her daughter to tell me that she is selling maize 100mk and I am going to buy. Then Jane came to chat and started saying that Aunt G a certain boy came today selling masamba and he gave for 70mk and he said that he want to marry me. I just accepted so that I can be eating vegetables often and tomorrow he will come. My grand mother told me to send some vegetables to my father at J. village. But yesterday they were saying that I must go back to my HB at Balaka but I don’t like him because he likes beer and smoking. And as of now my cloths are still there. Kondwani joined us and Jane started saying that: I was chatting with Ellesi I was telling her that: I want to go back to my HB and she answered that: It’s good indeed for you to get married. Even myself I am lucky, a certain boy who is staying in SA proposed Dorica and she refused as of now he proposed me through HB of Lovely and I told my mother! Then my mother accepted and am happy! As of now he will send some money for school fees and a cell phone. Kondwani laughed and said that: indeed I heard this story but we don’t know where he has a wife or not, Ellesi did not ask about this but she just accepted (Jane laughed). Tinenenji passed by then Kondwani said that this girl is pregnant she was in relationship with HB of Fatima and now. I heard Lovely yesterday that Fatima will come back, but they will be staying at [clinic] not here. That means Tinenenji will be staying alone the problem is that she married a man who was not able to give birth but not Tinenenji. (Jane laughed) Livia came she greeted everybody and said that: I am coming I want to take my money to Emra then I said that: why did you stop coming to knit? And she answered that: Am busy that’s why.

When Livia left Kondwani continued that: she is going to chat with Emra, Emr is now married to a certain man from Ch. village and now that HB of Emra has got his friend that friend is the one who want to marry Livia. He promised that he will come today to give her some fish to be exchanging with maize and she is going to Emra inorder to wait for that new HB.
We all laughed) and Jane said that Livia has got a lot of best friends and I do not know who is going to marry her (Among those boy-friends she has, which will Livia choose?) Later on I saw Livia coming back from Emra with angry face, she didn’t even say good-bye.

25 APRIL 2009 SATURDAY:

In the morning when I waked up I saw Kingsley selling potatoes, then Sofia bought for 20 mk, Venesi for 40 mk. Then I saw some women Emra, Livia, Elube, Venesi, buying vegetables a certain man was passing by selling. At 8:00 am I saw some women carried hoes going at the bore hole to share sweet potatoes that they planted. Then I saw grand children (5) of GVH picking cotton at a near by field in front of our house then Jane complained that Sofia is not helping them picking but after selling she will start complaining that GVH is not giving her some money. Then I heard Venesi saying that: Blessings wants to start charging telephones. (Did she? No, got a generator, but fuel is too expensive. People had gone to watch films there, but only for 3-4 days, then she stopped. People paid 10 MK).

At 8:00 am I saw those women who went to share their sweet potatoes coming back without potatoes. I asked that what happened! Then Elube answered that, Venesi came and said we must share tomorrow not today. Maybe she said this words because she already bought her breakfast. At 10 am Tumanene came and she said that I bought yesterday a hair chemical for 20 MK after selling my maize for 100 MK and I want you aunt G to treat my hair and I said no problem. Then I did it, after that she said that please aunt G apply my hair the oil that you use and I said no problem. After that I told her to be combing her hair properly then she started laughing and said that I will try and I will be more than you (we all laughed) Kondwani came and said that: this coming Friday I will buy mine and I will come here and I said no problem. Sofia joined us then a certain young boy came to sell maize and Sofia bought for 120 MK she was using a small plate at 2 MK.

Then Jane came while laughing then Tumanene asked her what she was laughing and she answered that the boy who was selling vegetables yesterday has come he is chatting with GVH he said he wants to marry me and now I want you Sofia to go there like my witness to show him that I am serious about marriage (we all laughed) Jane mentioned that Sofia! When you will go there try to tell the boy that wait for four months Jane wants to make bricks for her own house, I am just joking out I want him to be giving me some money for soap and lotion. And of those four months I know that I will be at Dedza to my HB (the one who plays cards) me said that we should be staying there not Balaka Jane and Sofia runned in order to talk to the boy selling vegetables.

Then we saw Livia bringing tomatoes. For Tumanene and Kondwani when Livia left The women complained that we bought vegetables and now we gave Livia to buy tomatoes at [small crossroads market] for 100 MK. For Tumanene, Kondwani, Sofia and Vanessa but she brought only 8 tomatoes. Then Tumanene said that Livia is a thief may be she just bought for 50 MK not 100 MK. Then all the women left to cook for lunch.

At 12:20 noon I saw Livia passing by then I greeted her and she said that I am going to give these
tomatoes to Emra. Then when coming back I saw Livia with a big plate full of big dried fish, I asked her where she got the fish (because I knew already from the women yesterday that she has found a new HB, and she already talked on the cell phone about fish.

Then Livia answered that: it's for my mother, Emra is the one who told me to give this fish to my mother! I don’t know if she is buying or not, then Sofia was passing by and she said that Livia why are you cheating your friend? Instead of telling her the truth? [J: Not ashamed because she was lying? G: Apparently not, just laughed which was meant to show that really lying, I thought she may come later to explain, but she didn’t]. Livia laughed and she continued her journey with Sofia. Then I saw dota of Amila coming. I greeted her and she said that: My father sent me here he said that you must give me 20 MK he wants to buy Fodya and I said that: sorry tell him that I don’t have money.

At 2 pm I started translating what Suset and Sofia has been writing and checking some mistakes. At 3 pm Sofia came, she started laughing and said that: Aunt G, Phingi was happy when she saw Livia coming with fish instead of asking her where she found them.

Then we stopped talking because Vanessa came and she said that aunt G I bought this hair chemical (American look) I bought at [small crossroads market] 100 MK I sold maize then I will come any day so that you can treat my hair, don’t tell my HB then she continued her journey to the grocery! She said she was going to buy tomatoes. Then I asked Sofia if she used a condom when her HB came, and she said no I didn’t and I said that: have you seen that your child is still young why can’t you go for family planning at [nearest tradingcenter] you can either choose injection or pills, and Sofia said that Aunt G it’s true. But I cannot manage to go alone. And I said no problem I can go with you. Then Sofia was happy and said that please don’t tell any one we will go in secret. [J: Why? He is her HB... But it should be this coming Friday and I said Ok. Then she said, I am going to GVH to chat and I said Ok. I want to continue knitting. Jane came (laughing) and she said that Aunt G the boy is still there and my grand mother cooked some nsima for him and she said that I must marry this man but I don’t want! Then she continued her journey to grocery she said that she was going to buy paraffin. I continued knitting alone up to 6:00 pm (some women went for compaign at [nearest primary school] said Kingsley at night.

26TH APRIL 2009 SUNDAY:

In the morning when I waked up I started washing my cloths then I saw Tinenenji she was coming back from the field she went to harvest ground nuts then she gave me a plate full of ground nuts. Later on I saw ex-HB of Rosemary, I greeted him and he said that I have now started picking my cotton, may be Wednesday. We will start selling (He was alone) Then Sofia came to greet me and she started saying that: Chief Mudzi A borrowed my money 375 MK and he said that he will give me maize but up to now he is not giving me. And as of now he is cooking his own food not eating with the wife I don’t know why and Aunt G I forgot to tell you that: my HB said that he wants to open a shop for me here. And he added that by next week he will transfer his cloths from Balaka to Mudzi B he wants to start staying with me here [J: True? beginning of June: his clothes are still at Balaka, he now says he wants to start living together at Liwonde]. I asked about my house and he said he know himself what he is doing then she continued her journey to the bore hole to share some sweet
After breakfast I started knitting then Sofia came for the second time and she said that Aunt G I am going to tell her what I have been dreaming this last 2 days. I asked Sofia what she has been dreaming and she said that: she has been dreaming about HB of GVH who died, asking about: another ceremony but people should eat a cow that she left. And GVH should share some of the cloths that her HB left to a son of Sofia. Then she continued her journey to GVH. Then I saw boyfriend of Venesi passing by carried potatoes, he greeted me and said that I must make Chipewa for him. Venesi will pay. (She didn’t pay and I sold to another boy who was passing by. Venesi said she had not told him to get one and she’ll pay, didn’t know anything about it. May be he was just joking). Then wife of Mr Ntawanga passed by coming back from the maize mill! She greeted me and said that: I went to the maize mill to make ufa woyera, I pounded the maize alone (First pound, dry and take to maize mill). Then Jane came to chat and she said that Livia has started a BS of selling tomatoes (kuoda for only 2 days) then I saw Livia coming with tomatoes and I bought for 20mk and she said that my father is ill (malaria) and I will chat later. And Jane continued that my grandmother is still saying that I should get married to the boy who sells vegetables because he grows a lot of rice, potatoes even tomatoes. But I don’t like him (she laughed).

Later on some boys passed by then Jane greeted them and the boys told Jane to escort them. Then she accepted and she didn’t even come back. No-one else came to continued knitting, I stayed alone up to dark At night I asked Kingsley to apply actellic in the morning (why not applying yourself? Sofia told G to just ask Kingsley to do it for her, since he is just staying anyway. Usually done by men). And he accepted.

In the morning when Kingsley waked up he started applying actellic. He finished after 1 hour. Then Jane came to greet me and she started saying that Aunt G have you heard that Ellesi wants to stop going to school. Her mother told her that: she cannot manage to pay school fees for her and its good to get married to the man in SA (Jane laughed) and she continued that yesterday at night a boyfriend of my grand mother came and he spent a night with him but I am not happy because my father died a month ago. And her sons in S.A. heard the story and they said that: if it is like that, then they will stop supporting her. She cooked some eggs and fish for him but he went back early in the morning. I think he was a shamed to be seen by people. Then we saw a certain boy coming with a big plastic bag full of leaves and tomatoes, and big dried fish Jane laughed and said that this is the boy who wants to marry me, he sells leaves. Then Jane told her boy friend to go to her grand mother then the boy went there then Jane told me that: I don’t like him, borrow me your bike I want to go at J. village to see my father who is ill, then I gave her (without knowing that she was running away, she didn’t want to talk with her new boy-friend.
Then when Jane left I saw GVH with her dotta-in-law coming. I greeted them and they asked me where Jane is then I said at J. village and they laughed and said that: she has runned away she don't want to get married to that boy. But he is good because he grows a lot of rice, tomatoes, leaves, maize, cotton, and when coming today he brought, ndiwo, dried fish, leaves, tomatoes and oil. Then I have told him that my grand daughter said that she don't like you, she has another boy friend but the boy started going while some tears were coming out of his eyes. And I gave him his tomatoes, fish and oil, vegetables. I told him that: go and eat this with your relatives and he left. (we all laughed). Then Sofia came she told me that there is a 40 days ceremony for the mother of Tinenenji lets go and give them some water they want to make thobwa today. Then I went with Sofia to the bore hole from there we went direct to give the water to Auleria and she said that people will start making thobwa at 3 pm then we went back home. On the way back some people from Mudzi B gathered at Mudzi B big tree. I stopped and listened that they were discussing and heard chief Mudzi B explaining Levison has stolen the maize from his mother-in-law with HB of Vanessa and Thokozi is the one who saw the maize in her house, and she told Rosemary that: My HB came there to steal but Levison and HB of Vanessa said that they don't know. But Livia called me separately and said that Levison told me that must give me some maize but I refused I told him that: I don't have money but I am afraid to tell this people. Then Levison told the group that: I didn’t steal, and this is the shameful story, from today on wards Thokozi is not my wife. I will be staying with my mother. Then Kingsley told me that: Rosemary likes selling the maize, later on she is cheating same people that Levison went to steal. Then chief Mudzi B told everybody to go home and everybody was just laughing it took almost (30 minutes discussions) Then I saw Mr Tembo Health Survey coming, and he stopped everybody and he told me to read a certain passage to the people and explain to them what it means In Chichewa and it was about Vitamin A those women who has 8-10 months children to receive some Vitamin A for their children and women who gave birth a month ago must receive. And everybody went to wash their bodies ready to receive Vitamin A Mr Tembo brought those out from the hospital.

In the afternoon I knitted alone because some women were busy helping to make thobwa because I was busy packing the maize, cleaning, in the house because of the actelic that Kingsley applied.

28th APRIL 2009 TUESDAY:

In the morning I saw a big car passing by! And it went directly to GVH. I runned to see what was happening then two of the men from the car dropped from the car asked me if I was from this village and I said yes but am doing a research. And they asked 6 villages surrounded by GVH then I told them. (What did they ask? The number and names of villages in GVH) and I asked them what they were looking for and they told me that they are doing a research for Moyo Wathanzi (organization Healthy Life) for women against HIV/AIDS. Just to understand how they prevent HIV/AIDS before and after giving birth. I asked them to show me some of the questions that they wanted to ask and they refused and said that its secret but we came from Balaka DC (They were 18 girls and 10 boys and 3 men). They separated others Nd. Village, J. village, Mudzi A. When I went to the borehole I met with Livia and I asked her to come home and she accepted) my aim was to ask her what she has been asked) when I reached home Livia came and she told me that she has been asked about this how old are you? How many people stay in your family, how old is your father, do you have an iron sheet house, how many bags do you have this year, and how many bags did you harvest last year, how many acres do you have. (Did she tell you about her answers? Told them she harvested only 3 bags
(while to G she had said 7 bags - which may also be a lie ......). At last they wrote down a number on the door. [What did people say about this survey? Complaining that many people are now coming to ask questions without benefit. Why don't they go to other villages? We will just cheat them...] What language do you like to speak, Then asked them why they asked me this questions and they said that: they want to find 2-3 women who know how to speak properly and able to answers some questions to go at the DC to answer some questions about HIV/AIDS.

Then I asked Livia how she managed to abort and she answered that I went at J Village to a certain woman, Suset is the one who told me about that woman and she gave me a big dried root and told me to boil for 3 days and drink for 3 days and I paid 500 MK and it worked. Then I asked her [Livia] about the boy who wants to marry her (related to Emra) then she said that: he is a cousin of Emra and she is the one who told me to accept and I accepted because the boy from Balaka China shop has a wife (she laughed) Jane joined them Livia said we will talk later I am going.

Then B started saying that at night we have started watching Television at Blessings we are paying 10 MK an she is using a generator that her HB sent. Then her grandmother called her then Jane said that Aunt G am coming, may be she want to give me some money becuase the people who came to ask some questions gave her 5 000 MK then she left.

I continued knitting alone then Jane came around 5:30 and she told me that Aunt G I will come and spend a night here [decided herself, not happy with relationship of grandmother], the boy friend of GVH will spend a night with GVH, as of now she is very busy making thobwa, cooking relish dried fish and nsima for him we will chat later I am going to eat nsima. Then she left.

29th APRIL 2009 WEDNESDAY:

The night of 28th April 2009 Jane indeed came to spend a night with the then she complained that: I am not happy with what my grand mother is doing. And everybody in the village know the story about new HB. That's why she is forcing me to get married so that she can be free to chat with her new HB as soon as Jane was talking at 8 pm night of 28th GVH answered and she said that Mayi Getrude, I have got a visitor this night, he is the uncle of my dotta In-law.. He just came to see me, and as of now he is going I was escorting him but now I told him to back home with me because this is already 8 pm he cannot manage to go alone he will go tomorrow. And I decided to tell you, and I said Ok no problem then she continued her journey.

Jane laughed and said that: she is thinking that: You don't know about their relationship. Early in the morning Jane left and she said that: I want to see if he is still there. After few minutes I saw Jane coming while laughing and she said that: Have you seen what she did this morning (grand mother) when I reached home I found mat, a lamp, a pillow in the kitchen but without a blanket and in the lamp there was no paraffin. Our grand mother cheated Kingsley and Me (Jane) and the people as if the man slept alone in the kitchen by putting a mat etc. while not (she laughed) As of now they have already washed bodies and they are escorting each other.
The same morning Pamela came, she told me to braid her hair and I accepted as I was braiding her hair, she started saying that I have harvested 5 ½ bags of maize (50 kg) but I am not getting worried because I have got a new HB who is taking care of me and we discussed to go for blood testing so that we can be able to trust each other, and we discussed not to give birth soon but after 2-3 years, I will be going for injection we are waiting for my child to grow, I asked who is he? When they met and she said that Aunt G I will tell you later. Then Livia came she was going to Balaka she came to ask if I wanted something there! And I said no. When she left Pamela started saying that: Livia came to me one day asking for some traditional medicine to abort and I told her that I don’t know, why can’t you just leave the child to grow and she said that: I don’t like the man because he has a wife. As of now A Rasta man who wants to marry her is my cousin but I want to tell him not to marry her because I hear that she wants to get married to a certain boy from Ch. village.

Then I asked Pamela why Suset stopped breast feeding and she answered that: I think she is HIV positive and she was told at the hospital to stop breast feeding her child. And I saw her one day eating lampe nut. [: ? G: Fortified groundnut paste to get strong, distributed at hospital to people with AIDS and ARVS to become strong again], that nowadays at the hospital they only give those who are HIV positive. And when we went to receive Vitamin A that day. Her child was just crying we asked her why she is not giving her milk? And she said, she wants to sleep that’s why the child was just crying and everybody was just looking at her because her child is still young and herself is very young. When I finished braiding her hair she said that: Aunt G we will talk later, I am going to wash my cloths at the borehole then she left. Then Makuta from B. village came. she smiled and said that Aunt G I brought this gift for you (a battery for a motor cycle) she said that you will use this with your radio (I said Zikomo) I have done this because you are keeping my secrets and my HB sent 2 batteries from SA. I am happy because yesterday I went to spent a night with my boy friend at Balaka at a certain rest house and I didn’t use a condom because when I will be pregnant it will be for my HB in SA She stopped talking because Kondwani came to greet me and she said that: some people at [nearest trading center] are buying cotton at 40 MK/kg but I will not sell now I will wait till the price will be high.

After few minutes Kondwani and daughter in-law of group left. Then I continued translating what Suset and Sofia has been writing. “HB of Jasmine and Jasmine still ill” said mayi Ntawanga and Elube at the borehole and they still complained that they can not sell cotton at 40 MK but they will wait till the price will be high. Sofia came to flash her HB to tell him that his father and mother are ill.

Then Tumanene came to give me sweet potatoes full plate (not cooked) I greeted her and I said thanks a lot for the gift. And she started saying that Esnart has lost her cell phone. She went to the toilet with it and when she wanted to come out of the toilet it felled down in the toilet, some boys tried to take it out but it was just going dipper and dipper. She said that I am going to fetch some water and I just came here to give you potatoes. Then I went with her to fetch some water.

On the way I saw chief Mudzi B her 2 children picking cotton. At the borehole I found Blessings, Emra and HB of Fatima washing their clothes. Then Dorica was fetching some water and HB of Fatima asked Dorica to help him washing his cloths then Dorica accepted and started helping him, then Kingsley started laughing and said that: Dorica practice makes perfect work hard! Then HB of Fatima laughed. On the way back I found Thokozani eating potatoes with Levison [but he just stated publicly that Thokozani will not be his wife any more? Maybe was just cheating, ashamed that he still
stays with her after she called him a thief. Afraid people will laugh at him. Then Sofia was passing by and she said that: have you seen aunt G, Levison is back now but his aim is to get married to Charity. When I reached home I saw ex-HB of Rosemary passing by with a 50 kgs bag of cotton, he was coming back from his cotton field alone. Later on Kondwani came and she said that I want to knit 2 lines only because yesterday I didn’t knit I was pounding my maize.

Then Esnart came for me to braid her hair. Then Kondwani asked her why she is not pregnant because her HB came December. Then Esnart laughed and answered that I discussed with my HB to go for family planning (injection) I will get pregnant when my child will be 4 years I will go there in SA. Then Kondwani said that it’s good to go for family planning as I was doing when I was married. Sofia joined us. Then Sofia started complaining that Vanessa harvested only 3 ½ bags but she used to go with Tumanene to play cards, the one who won takes the maize. And even the HB is selling maize in secret like what Chief and Hamra (Mudzi A) are doing.

All the women laughed then Charity +her mother was passing by going to fetch some water! Then Charity said that: I have started selling tomatoes if you want you can come to buy. On the way back Kondwani I said that Aunt G can you ask her how much is it, then I said that I have forgotten her name (I was joking) and they said Charity or Daina: then I started calling her Daina X 5. She didn’t respond. I runned thinking that she didn’t hear me calling. Then she answered me that: You are stupid, you need to bear your child and call her Daina not me. All the women were surprised and I said that: Please forgive me because these women told me that you are Charity or Daina.

And the women continued that don’t worry aunt G. It is her real name, only that she didn’t want to answer you properly she don’t even have a child. (All the women laughed) And I told her mother that: please tell Charity to forgive me, and she said no problem I will tell her. Jane came and she started saying that: GVH gave Sofia maize ½ bag because she didn’t harvest enough maize. Esnart called me then she said that: I am selling a chicken if you want it, you can buy at 250 MK I want to find money for soap my HB is not sending money he said he don’t have. And I said sorry I don’t have money. Some women didn’t come to knit in the afternoon because they went to play net ball at M. village, said Jane.

30th APRIL 2009 THURSDAY:

At night GVH came, she said that I decided to chat with you a bit because Kingsley is waiting to eat. [J: ? G:Kingsley eats together with younger brother separately from girls who eat with GVH nsima.] Then she (GVH) started saying that: nowadays because people in my village have got enough food. They are eating nsima in the morning, lunch, supper (3 times a day) I asked her about their names and she said Thokozani+ her HB, Rosemary, Jasmine. But these days we have got potatoes why they can’t eat potatoes in morning then nsima for Lunch? (she laughed) I asked her about cotton selling and she (GVH) said that: as of now only vendors are buying at 40 MK/kg and people are not selling but other people are saying that soon after presidential election buyers will start buying at 75 MK/kg. But we will hear everything on Saturday there will be a meeting at [small crossroads market]. Then I said ok I want to be there, so that I can here the truth and she said no problem it will be around 9:30 am At 7:10 am I went to fetch some water, then I met with Saibi going at [nearest primary school] school to sell sweet
On the way back I found Kondwani at home waiting for me. I greeted her! Then she said that I want to beg you aunt G there is something else that I want to discuss with Kingsley, Tayali and Jane but we want to discuss here because we don’t want GVH to know. Then I accepted Jane, Kingsley came. Then Kondwani started saying that: B I heard that you went at J. village to tell your father that: GVH is having a new HB now? Then Jane said that yes! I told him because I am not happy with that story. Her HB died few months ago. And this man who is in relationship with her is her In-law. Then Kingsley said that: Jane do you know that you are still young and you don’t have chance to tell your grand mother that she is not doing good? Jane answered that: you are saying this because you are happy with the death of our grand father. Kondwani said that: we are not happy but she is free to get married and B said that is true! But not with her in-law. Kingsley answered that: when GVH will hear this story, you know what she used to do. She will cry all the day going to the graveyard. And when her sons from SA will hear what she is doing they will be angry and stop sending money. Jane answered that: I am not afraid but I want her to stop the relationship with her in-law because it is a shameful story. And I will indeed tell her sons in SA Jane continued. That means all of you, you are happy with this because you are prostitutes [J: ]? Kondwani and chief Mudzi B have children from different men so they find this kind of behavior normal accuses B. ] Kingsley was angry and he took a big stick in order to beat Jane, Then Jane runned away. Then the story ended there. Everybody departed. Later on at 6:40 pm GVH came! She asked me where Jane has gone? And I said I don’t know then she left. At night Kingsley came to sleep and he said Jane has gone to Jin village to encourage her father to tell sons of GVH in SA that GVH is in relationship with her In-law. I am not happy said Kingsley because group Mudzi B will chase all the grand children to go back to our village but our parents died. Then he slept.

1 MAY 2009 FRIDAY:

In the morning Evelin and chief Mudzi B passed by. They carried big fish (chambo) in their hands they said they went to buy at J. village. Then Amila passed by. She greeted me and she said that: I am still doing the BS of selling zitumbuwa (maize flour cakes with banana) and after selling my HB told me that he wants some batteries and am going to buy for him. I asked her if he gave her some money and she said no! I have used my money. And after selling fire wood today, I will find extra money to buy ingredients for zitumbuwa (bananas, soda, salt, oil) ( others they don’t add bananas when making zitumbuwa but maize, soda and oil) I asked her how much she [Amila] harvested then she said nkholkwe and after selling cotton I will buy extra maize HB of Vanessa passed by with ½ bag of cotton he was coming back from his field.
with 2 bags of cotton, he was coming back from his field. The GVH and her 2 grand daughters were also picking cotton they came out with 2 bags (50 kgs).

After lunch Kondwani came to knit and she started saying that Aunt G all women stopped knitting why? And I said I don’t know Then she continued that: they are not busy in the field but just chatting at the big tree and I said that; May be they are not interested now. Then daughter of Kondwani came (10 years) I greeted her and she said I am going back now, I was thinking that you have gone some where else. When her daughter left Kondwani started laughing and said that Aunt G do you know why she came here? And I said no my children told me that: I should not get married again because all the HB used to leave me alone and they even said that: if I will have another child! They will kill him/her. As of now we all sleep at the same mat. I told my children that: I will be sleeping alone at the bed room or at the sitting room but they said that: No! lets use the same mat either at the bedroom or sitting room because when you will be alone, that means you want some men to stay with you at night, but when we will use the same mat you can not do it and they encouraged me to come here and knit but not moving around with men, or going very far with some women. And now she is happy that I am here

Kondwani continued that Aunt G! Have you heard that daughter of Alma (big woman) want to divorce? She has a HB in Blantyre and he is very rich, he has nice houses in Blantyre that people are renting he has a car and he is the one who built the house that she stays in this village and now he told his wife to be going in SA to buy different things to sell here in Malawi. She went there in SA twice. And now she told her HB that: I don’t want marriage! Let’s divorce. Then the HB is just crying because his wife started moving around with different men in SA and she has a friend who goes to SA to buy things for sell and now she also told her HB that: she don’t want marriage and may be he is the one who is encouraging daughter of Alma to end her marriage. This is not good behavior said Kondwani. Later on Tumanene passed by selling mandasi and Amila also passed by selling zitumbuwa (maize flour cakes). Then Grace came to braid my hair I tried chatting with her asking how much she harvested and she said I don’t know then she sent Tumanene to buy some fish 180 MK at the grocery. Then Kondwani asked that: Grace why are you buying a lot of fish? Are you going to have a visitor this night an she said no. Kondwani continued that: Your boy friend from [small crossroads market] is still coming to see you and she said yes. Then Kondwani said that aunt G go and take a radio we want to listen about campaign and some music. We all received T shirts for Bingu when we went to the meeting last week at [nearest primary school] and everybody in the village has got a DPP t.shirt said Kondwani.

At 5:15 pm everybody left. (Only Grace and Kondwani came).

2 MAY 2009 SATURDAY:

In the morning when I waked up Innocence came, she greeted me and said that: I am selling maize ½ bag 600 MK and I asked her how much she harvested and she said 7 bags. How many bags remaining she said 4 ½ bags now ½ bag am selling that means I have got 4 bags - 3 bags sold. I asked her why she is just selling maize and she said I want to buy cloths, then Hamra passed by she was coming back from the borehole Innocence greeted her and said that my brother will come today! He wants his maize and Hamra said ok I will bring today. Then Innocence told me that Hamra took 500 MK to his
brother in order to pay back maize. Hamra continued that am busy harvesting groundnuts five days now but I will finish tomorrow. Dorica and her mother passed by Dorica greeted me and said that Aunt G lets go to the field we are going to harvest cotton and I said I will come later. Innocence left.

Later on I went to fetch some water then I found Venesi washing her cloths when I reached home I saw GVH and her 2 grand daughters picking cotton.

Later on Sofia came to greet me and she said that: My son is not getting better then I went early in the morning to a certain traditional doctor to take some medicine and now I am back, but I did not pay anything he said I will pay a chicken when my son will get better. Then she continued her journey to her grand mother.

At 11:30 grand mother of Livia passed by. She greeted me and said that: I am going to help HB of Jasmine picking cotton, he is getting better now and he decided to start today! Then she continued her journey.

At 2 pm I went to see what Sofia has been writing and everything was ok then Molly and Venesi passed by! They greeted me and said that: we are going at M. village for DPP campaign then Vanessa and Hilda passed by. They greeted me an said that tikupita kuganyu at [small crossroads market], selecting maize by removing unwanted things. On the way back I passed by Ada cooking nsima chief Mudzi B was drying groundnuts.

At home I started translating what Suset has been writing. At 3 pm I went to see what Suset has been writing then on the way I saw Rashida picking cotton alone then I found Suset and her daughter just coughing. I greeted her and she said ndikudwala (I am sick) then I told her to give me the notebook and check at home because I stayed a days without going to check - on the way I saw Ellen and HB eating nsima with masamba (vegetables) then I met with Chikondi I greeted her and asked if she is ready to start writing and she said no am busy picking cotton on Monday people will start selling cotton but the price not known will see on Monday at sub/TA when I reached home I started knitting alone no-one joined me up to 6:30 pm.

In the morning when I waked up I saw GVH her 2 grand daughter’s harvesting. In-law of Esnart passed by he greeted me and said that this girl is my wife I have married now and I have 1 child. But I am still doing BS of charging T phones. I am staying in the house of Esnart in another bedroom with my wife. Then they continued their journey. Then later on Esnart came and asked me to flash her HB in SA in order to tell him that she lost her cell-phone. I flashed then he called and discussed what they wanted.

After lunch sons of Jasmine from Zomba and Blantyre flashed, I went to Jasmine to tell her then Jasmine flashed again and they called. Jasmine flashed again and they called. Jasmine said that they wanted to know if their father is getting better.

On my way back home I greeted Phingi and Livia who were sitting pa khonde. After few minutes a certain young girl came and said that Livia Emra is calling you.
She said that man from Mangochi has come he wants to talk to you! Then Livia runned. Phingi said that who is that man? Then I said I don’t know, Phingi continued that: may be he is the one who brought fish, because Livia one day came with fish she said that she bought to Emra then we saw Livia coming back with leaves, fish and a big cup full of thobwa, but Phingi didn’t ask her anything she just received. Then I went back home no-one else came to knit, but Sofia came to chat, she said that Aunt I went to my grand mother at lunch. Then I told her that Jane went to J. Village because she is not happy with the behavior that you are doing, she said that why didn’t you wait for a year? Then GVH started crying I failed to talk a lot to my grand mother she was just crying. Kondwani and Sofia say that they new about this relationship even before the death of her HB, but out of respect to older woman can’t tell her to stop, that she is setting bad example to them. [Sofia:] But my HB has not yet started making bricks for my house, I don’t know what he is thinking (her son started crying and she said that: I am going to make porridge for him) I stayed alone up to 5:40 pm But at 5:20 pm a certain man passed by with a chair he was selling and I bought it at 300 MK because I liked it to use when knitting in Lilongwe I was tired knitting then I slept earlier than all the days.

4 MAY 2009 MONDAY:

In the morning I started my journey to Mangochi to take a form for Limbe University. On the way I passed by Rashida harvesting cotton alone. Hamra harvesting cotton alone, Florence harvesting cotton with her HB when I reached at Mangochi Depot I called Mr Tambala education co-ordinator to ask how to get at the office and he came and picked me by diocese car. When I reached at the office he gave me the form and told me how to fill the gaps. I paid 1 400 MK to and from transport on the way back I found Hamra still harvesting I stopped at Jasmine’s house to greet her, then I found Jasmine, Innocence, Sofia, Thokozani grandmother of Tum, and Fatima Playing cards with money and maize [Levison and brother of Livia bought cards at Balaka for 50 MK. G saw Jasmine & HB, Innocence and son from J. village play together. Also other men and women together. But now HB of Jasmine burnt the cards bcoz the women delayed in fetching water, cooking etc]. They were contributing 5 MK per game or a cup of maize per game everybody was happy and Livia said that: Aunt G most of the women stopped knitting because of playing under the big tree. Jasmine said that: my HB is still not getting better coughing and some sores in lungs. May be he will go tomorrow at the hospital I was tired and I went home quickly no-one else came to knit.

5 MAY 2009 TUESDAY:

In the morning when I waked up I saw Vanessa and her HB going to harvest cotton, GVH and her 2 grand children were also harvesting cotton. At 8 am I went to charge my phone the on the way I saw Rashida harvesting cotton alone, Florence and her HB were also harvesting cotton. At the grocery no woman selling. On the way back I passed by house of the one who planted groundnuts but she was not there.

At 9 am I saw women from Mudzi B and Mudzi A going at the big tree with their children (scale)

After lunch I started knitting then Tumanene and Kondwani joined me (Thokozani and Emra and
Vanessa passed by, they told me that: they were going to play cards at Jasmine’s house (with pots of maize in their heads) then Kondwani said that: I don’t like this game because it causes stealing. (Eg After harvesting people now contribute maize, and later find they have no maize anymore, and may be tempted to steal. Eg Rosemary’s children stole maize to contribute to card game). Then Tumanene said that its true and I have now decided to stop. Even GVH is angry with that game, she went in the morning where some women gathered playing cards and teared into pieces all the women were angry but gull said that if you continue, I will tell the police to come [J: Forbidden to play cards? G: Yes, they don’t allow people to play cards. G saw in Mangochi people moving around to see if people play cards and bring them to police. HB of Jane plays cards secretly, hiding from police]. And everybody stopped. As of now others are playing at Musitafa’s & Jasmine’s house.

A certain man passed by then Tumanene said that: he is the HB of old woman mother of Elube (I have forgotten the name) But he has 4 wives the fourth one, is that old woman. Then Kondwani laughed and said that: why can’t she chase him? He is coming because people have already harvested if my HB will come back I will not accept and even my children cannot accept.

Tumanene answered that yesterday I was querreling with Jeneti and Ellesi, I went there looking for my plate and Jeneti said that: do you think that I am a thief? If you are tired why can’t you go and stay with your mother in your village. I was angry and I flashed my HB in reminding him to build a house in my village. And imagine aunt G, Ellesi saying that she can beat me she is not even respecting me I don’t know why? I was staying with her in my house, but I chased her because she is rude. Livia passed by going to the borehole, then Kondwani laughed and said that: the boy who wanted to marry Livia from Ch village stopped coming! Some one told him that Livia is a prostitute Tumanene laughed. And Kondwani said that why can’t she just choose one boy. She stopped with a boy from Balaka shop because all the shops were closed waiting for elections. [J: G: Because he did not get some money as usually. Only the shops with foreign owners were closed, who were afraid something may happen during elections. Closed for about 3 weeks]. Then son of GVH in SA called saying that: I want to talk to my mother if possible then I runned to give her. I didn’t hear properly what they were discussing, but GVH told me that: My son (father of Jane) is admitted at balaka hospital he will be back after 40 days he has TB said the doctor and I will be their waiting for him to get better. Then I said sorry for that. When I reached home Sofia came to flasher HB> He called then Sofia said that: Although you are my HB but your are stupid because, you just gave me 250 MK since last week, don’t come here again just build my house then we must divorce. You are just eating nice food there with your stupid wife leaving your 4 kids here. We all laughed and she switched off his telephone Kondwani said that very good Sofia, that means he will come soon to give you extra money. [J: Did he indeed? G: It helped indeed, even up till now (May 31) he sends more money, eg 500MK “bcoz of those words that I told him,” Sofia told G later]. Sofia laughed and she continued her journey to GVH Kondwani left and said that I am going to prepare sweet potatoes for dinner my children are refusing to eat nsima with thelele. [ It seems that Kondwani’s children are in-charge instead of her! boy 13, girl 12, boy 9/10, boy 6/7.]

Tumanene went to buy matches I stayed alone knitting then I saw Esnart, Vanessa. Thokozani coming back from playing cards.
6 MAY 2009 WEDNESDAY:

In the morning when I waked up I saw Elube with her HB in the field, she was talking to Jasmine that: we are now harvesting mawere for thobwa, and Jasmine said that: I will start on Saturday as of now am busy harvesting cotton and my HB is still ill. Then Livia passed by I greeted her and she said that: I am going to the maize mill, I want to start cooking my own food now, from today on wards. [J: why from then on wards, had there been a fight, what triggered her decision? Had now harvested her own maize + zie verderop = ouders ziek. But only did it for 1 day, since then eating with parents again]

Then GVH came and she said that: keep these 2 blankets for me, (to prevent mice from eating, no one to chase them. Stayed at hospital for 2 weeks, but came home sometimes) I am going to the hospital and I will come back after 2-3 weeks when she left, chief Mudzi A came, he greeted me and said that I want to escort GVH to the hospital am late because I was busy cooking my food. I asked him why he didn’t tell his wife to cook and he said that: since last week am cooking alone because my wife is just moving around and I want to start making bricks for my house. Then he left. Later on Esnart same, she gave me Tea leaves and said that: My HB sent a lot from SA and I decided to share with you and I said Zikomo Kwambiri (thanks a lot) then she left.

Doris passed by going to the maize mill and she was telling her friend that my HB started a business of hiring a bike from Balaka to [nearest trading center] and am happy because we are able to buy what we want in our new family. When coming back he used to buy matemba (dry fish), sopo, lotion and sometimes cooking oil. Then I saw Livia coming back from the maize mill, I stopped her and asked where she will be getting some money to buy ndiwo (relish), and she said that: I will start the Business of selling zitumbuwa today, and on Friday I will go at Liwonde to buy matemba for sell. I have decided to start cooking my own food because my mother and father are not getting better (ill often nowadays) then its good for me to practice ["so that I can take care of myself if they die". She cooked for parents when they were ill, one meal for all to share, not separately]. Then Sofia came she asked me to escort her at the maize mill to make ufa woyera (white maize flour) and I said no problem am free to go on the way to the maize mill HB of Sofia called and he told Sofia that I will send a certain man this afternoon to give you sugar, soap, and some money for ndiwo. Sofia smiled, then we found mem at the borehole washing her clothes.

Still on the way we met with Kingsley carried 50 kg bag of cotton he was coming back from the field. Sweetness was on the field harvesting cotton alone. At [nearest primary school] school I saw Saibi selling guavas, at the maize mill I found 2 men vendors buying cotton, I asked them how much per kg and they said they are buying at 30 mk/kg.

Sofia paid 50 mK and she bought matemba 30 MK, tomatoes 10 MK. And she told me that: I have bought this because my HB will sent some money. On the way back we met with wife of Tulipesi going to the maize mill she carried 45 Kgs of maize. Sofia asked why she didn’t ask her HB to go on the bike and she said that: I told him but he refused to go he said he is tired (Sofia laughed) and said that Aunt G most of the men are lazy, instead of going by bike quickly but he is sending a wife.

Sofia continued that: tomorrow I will go at Balaka hospital to see GVH and her son. (She went to the maize mill with full basin - to make ufa-woyera). I asked her [Sofia] how many bags remaining
including the maize that she was exchanging with beans, and she said 3 bags remaining now. I wish I could buy extra maize but I don’t have money, the problem is that: My HB has got 2 wives an it is difficult for him to buy enough food for me.

After lunch Haliday, in-law of Pamela, came and asked me to treat her hair with Soft and free chemical. I asked how much she bought and she said my HB sent from SA and I am happy because I could have not managed to buy myself. Chief Mudzi B came and she said that: Aunt G I want you to braid my hair because tomorrow I will go at the hospital in Balaka to see GVH and I said that: most of the women in this village has treated their hair, but I don’t have money and after selling cotton I will buy mine. (We all laughed) Kondwani passed by with 2 women (new faces and chief Mudzi B started saying that: do you know Aunt G that Kondwani is my young sister? And I said yes I know. Have you seen those 2 women with Kondwani? And I said yes! Then she continued that: she has rented her field to those women (2 000 MK) instead of waiting in September or October so that she can use the money in hunger season! Or else she could thought of planting a lot of maize and sell, but instead she is renting to others. Lovely, Fissa, Thokozani, Vanessa, Elube passed by and chief said that: Instead of knitting they are going to play cards. And yesterday Levison, son of Elube, and HB of Vanessa stopped playing cards at 12:30 pm, which is not good. And they are free, to play card because GVH is at the hospital. After braiding her hair he left. I stayed alone up to evening.

7 MAY 2009: THURSDAY:

In the morning when I waked up. I went to fetch some water, then I saw chief Mudzi B harvesting cotton with her 2 daughters. Then prepared my journey to take my certificate at Zomba.

On the way I met with Sofia, Kondwani, Evelin, Vanessa going at Balaka hospital to see group Mudzi B and her son. Still on the way I saw Hamra harvesting cotton alone and HB of Chenawe was also harvesting cotton alone.

When I reached at Zomba Maneb they greeted me and said that: sorry we failed to send it because of other problems. But we received a call yesterday from Janneke asking about your certificate. After his words he gave me the certificate. And on the way back I stopped at Balaka and made some photocopies. It was already 3:30 and I found the post office closed. On the way back I stopped to Chief Brusi to ask the house of the Pastor of our church and he said that he stays at Balaka but as of now he was found at a certain resthouse with the wife of his friend. [The paster was caught and since then not allowed to continue as a priest, because he set a bad example. So now there is no pastor.] And I can just sign for you. And I gave her to sign. Still on the way back I found Innocence making zitumbuwa for sell. She said that she bought oil for 400 MK, her own mgaiwa, bananas from her field. When I reached home, Mr Ntawanga passed by. He greeted me and said that he was going to attend a meeting at Mudzi B big tree, they wanted to choose 60 members of CBO I followed him just to listen. But chief Mudzi A complained that a lot of people didn’t go to attend but they finished harvesting in Mudzi B – Kondwani, Lovely, Grace, Venesi, Vanessa, (others forgotten and in Mudzi A: Victoria, Serena, friend of Jasmine (K. village)) were chosen to be members of CBO and they discussed to contribute 100 MK per head. And they said because most of the people didn’t come to
attend its good to arrange another day so that all the 60 members should be there. In order to be told their responsibilities. After 40 Min everybody departed. At 7:15 pm Innocence came to greet me, we sat on the veranda because it was very hot then within few minutes we saw Pamela and HB of Gettie passing by. Innocence laughed and said that: Have you seen Aunt G Pamela is with her boyfriend they were waiting for the darkness but that boy is very young and he has his first born child now. While Pamela has 4 children Innocence laughed and her mother sent Trinity to call her. After 10 minutes Sofia came to greet me and she started saying that: I went to see GVH at the hospital and on the way back I met with my HB and he gave me 400 MK, beans and 4 cabbages. But he is very thin now than before. I don’t know what is wrong. [New wife is not taking well care of him, Sofia said. But Innocence said that his child there is also very thin and often ill - without mentioning the disease. But G guessed she meant to insinuate disease, but wasn’t open to say explicitly. “I know my brother likes a lot of women” ]

Sofia continued that: Have you heard Aunt G that: Tumanene was fighting with Ellesi and her mother. Last night? and I said I don’t know anything. Sofia continued that: I think Tumanene will tell you tomorrow what happened. It was already 8 pm and Sofia left.

In the morning when I asked up I saw Sofia and 2 grand daughters of group village headman harvesting cotton. Later on I saw Innocence going at [nearest primary school] school to sell zitumbuwa (maize flour pan cakes) . She was selling at 5 MK each and she said she made 600 MK.

Then Pamela came for me to braid her hair then she started saying that: Tumanene explained to her HB what Jeneti and Ellesi did. Then her HB answer that: Tumanene must go to her village and when the HB will be back from SA that means he will follow her there. He was angry with what Jeneti did. I asked Pamela what happened and she said that I don’t know. But I have just seen Tumanene washing her clothes today and some blankets, she said that she is preparing for her journey. Then we saw HB of Fatima passing by an Pamela said that: Fatima wanted to come back to her HB but when she heard that Tinenenji’s pregnant is for her HB she changed her decision. Her HB is the one who told her to come back. Pamela continued that: Am happy because my new HB is buying everything for me, ndiwo (relish), soap, lotion.

When Pamela left I saw Livia coming back from [nearest primary school]. Then she said that: I am back because a lot of people are selling zitumbuwa including Amila and Saibi with 3 women are selling potatoes while other women are selling Kanyenga and sugarcane and I just sold 50 MK.

After lunch I went to Sofia to tell her that: we must go and fetch some firewood then Jasmine said that: lets go. Before going there I saw Emra going to sell maize to Brother of Innocence It was for 175 MK she told me that: She wanted to buy shoes for her son because on Sunday as she wanted to go at Ch. village to see her mother in-law and she asked me to braid her hair on Saturday 9th May.

On the way to fetch some firewood Jasmine complained that G Your friend (Innocence) sold maize yesterday to her brother 25 Kg-750 MK but I don’t know what she wants to buy. She went to the maize mill to make her own ufa (maize flour), she said she wants to start eating her own food but she is failing to
find ndiwo (relish) she just cooked matemba (dry fish) one day later own she was just staying without eating nsima but potatoes lunch. She is lazy failing to dind ndiwo in the field even firewood, I am the one who is doing it.

Sofia started laughing on the way we met with GVH and she said that she came back from Balaka hospital inorder to attend a meeting at [nearest primary school] then Sofia said that: I have heard that Jeneti wants to get married! Then GVH said that, its true I heard last Monday, But it is not good for her to get married because she is taking ARV’s. If she will indeed get married! That means she will die soon. [G thinks she just said this because she does not know much about the working of HIV in the body]. Then she continued her journey back home when we reached at the bush we didn’t find dried firewood then we started cutting down a tree and shared. Jasmine laughed and said that G you have managed to cut down a tree alone while some women in our village they just beg firewood to their friends because they are just lazy. On the way back we met with Aisha and her HB harvesting tomatoes. Then Jasmine bought for 20 MK Sofia 20 MK. Then Jasmine stopped somewhere else and said that: I will come one day to take some clay I want to start making clay pots now.

When I reached home Chikondi came and said that: I have seen that Janneke is about to come and I have decided to take that note-book and continue writing what I have found everyday and I said no problem but we will calculate from today up to the day that you will be tired and she said no problem. Then I reminded her what to write then she left.

No-one else came to knit I stayed alone up to darkness.

9 MAY 2009: SATURDAY:

In the morning when I waked up HB of Vanessa [J: Now not working at Liwonde, but (in June) busy making bricks for son of Sibil] came to borrow my bike, he said that: I am going to sell cotton at J. village although they are buying at 35 MK< but I want money for soapl. Then I gave him abike.

Then at 8 am Livia came for me to braid her hair. Then she started saying that: I have stopped the BS of zitumbuwa (maize flour pan cakes) because a lot of women at [nearest primary school] were selling zitumbuwa. Then I asked her who is going to marry her now because her house is about to be finished now.
Meaning: who helped you to build that house? Then she said that: I don’t know because the Rasta man who sells beans said he want to marry me but as off now my father and mother said they don’t want a Rasta man because he likes smoking. But at first they encouraged me to marry with him because he works hard in the field, and he married a certain wife but she died after a year I don’t know what happened. As of now my parents are encouraging me to get married with a man that Emra searched for me because he brings fish when coming. But I don’t want him now because after telling him to go for blood testing he refused he said sindikufuna (I don’t want) I was not sure because I heard Livia talking to Emra that: tell him that I am waiting for him to come and see my parents. Emra was going at Ch. village.) Livia continued that: By the end of this month I will go at Mangochi to see my sister. And I know that: When I will be there some else will propose me and I will accept, then I will just tell my mother that: Ndakwatira (I am married). Am saying this because most of the time she sayd: Its good for you my daughter to get married before I die. But when I found a HB she says no! don’t
And I asked her Livia how Emra found a new HB, and she said that: Emra has a father at Ch. village, then she went there for 3 weeks just to chat, then a certain boy proposed her for marriage and she accepted but the boy never married, Emra is the first wife. And on 10 May Emra will now meet with her mother-in-law at Ch. village. That why she wanted to braid her hair with extension. Still in the morning we saw new HB of Pamela [= HB of Gettie, G had heard gossips already, but now saw with her own eyes] passing by then Livia said that: This man spent a night with Pamela, I saw him coming out her house. (She laughed)

Then we saw a lot of girls carried pots, fire-wood, cooking-sticks, ufa from Mudzi B only. I asked Livia what was happening and she said that: After harvesting every year. All the young girls used to gather and cook nsima and ndiwo (masanje) (playing/game) to eat with their friends, and I said that: After braiding your hair I want to go and see. At 10;20 am I went to see Tumanene [married to brother of Jeneti] and I found her cooking nsima. I greeted her and asked what happened for them to fight. Then she said that: I was looking for my plate, then I went to ask Ellesi if she borrowed. Then instead of answering that I didn’t borrow she started saying that: You are stupid! Do you think that I am a thief? And Jeneti also said that do you think that: I can borrow your plate? I was angry then started fighting with Ellesi, her mother joined Ellesi and I was alone. But I managed beating them up to the point that Ellesi started crying. No-one stopped us, then Jeneti went into her house and closed the door (Tumanene laughed) I told my HB and he said that, its good for me to go at Mw. village, to start staying with my mother, when he will back from SA he will follow me there. And I accepted as of now I have already hired a bike to carry my maize, and everything in my house that what my HB told me. But I will take the knitting needles, I want to continue knitting and I said no problem you can.

Then at 11:10 am I continued my journey to see what children were cooking. And I found chief Mudzi B, Kondwani, Vanessa, Blessings, Sofia, Grace, Emra and Chisoni chatting there, I joined them chatting. Then Emra started saying that: I sent a certain boy to sell cotton 1 bag 50 kg for me at J. village and I payed him 100 MK and he sold for 750 MK - 30 per Kg. I want to use it transport to go at Ch. village to my mother-in-law. My HB gave me money for transport, but I bought new chitenje. Kondwani laughed and said that: you are now serious about marriage and she said yes! Because I have seen that Ndaba will not help me. Then Vanessa and Kondwani said that: Aunt G we are thinking that HB of Tumanene is chasing her because the child that Ayami is taking care, belongs to the 1st wife of HB of Tumanene and when he was going to SA he bought new chitenje for her. (After Tumanene left, the ex-wife came to answer a call from the man from SA). And Jeneti was happy with that woman not Tumanene, they say because Tumanene is not beautiful. And sometimes Jeneti used to call that ex-wife to come and chat, which is not good. And may be HB of Tumanene wants to continue marriage with that ex-wife. If not! That means he will have 2 wives.

Children were busy cooking Dorica, Ellesi, Modesta, Daughter of Venesi, daughter of Sofia call the children from Mudzi B] and after cooking we all ate there at the big tree, and all the children were busy and happy dancing while cooking. After eating the children collected all the remaining nsima and ndiwo to throw at the graveyard, they said that all the dead people must eat the remaining food. They came back while singing and dancing. Mother of Dorica and Jeneti, Lovely were also
participating in dancing while other women were just laughing, others clapping hands. Then Kondwani said that Aunt G do you know that mother of Dorica married father of Jane at the beginning and I said I don’t know and she continued that: she has a child from him (her eldest son).

At 2:30 most of the women were now tired dancing and Jeneti said that when we were young girls we were also cooking and dancing with our friends but girls of nowadays, they don’t like dancing in the afternoon because they are ashamed of their boyfriends. Mother of Dorica answered that: But they like dancing at night when they can hide from their boyfriends. (Boy friends won’t see them then, because they are at home). (We all laughed). Most of them departed and only Kondwani, Vanessa, Chief Mudzi B remained and Tumanene, then they said that Aunt G you need to chat here the whole day, you will go at 5 pm and I said no problem but I must go and take something to knit. I runned to write short notes because I was using my phone and the battery was low.

After few minutes I went back to chat with the women and they were happy. Then Tumanene said that Aunt G is it true that, at the hospital they now give condoms like underwear? And I said no! but female condoms not under wears everybody laughed and said that: who told you Tumanene? And she said that some one else from this village told me that: Are you from this village who don’t know how to use condoms like under wear (in appearance) Kondwani said that: this is my fist time to hear about condoms and I have never used since I was born and chief Mudzi B said that even my self. But I just saw young boys making a ball and I asked them and they told me that it’s a condom amai a Vanessa laughed. Tumanene said that I knew about male condoms when my HB was working at a certain organization. One day he came with 60 condoms he said he received. And he explained to me that: Its female condoms. It protects from unwanted pregnancy and HIV, but were not using them. Instead he was giving to young boys to make balls. But when he left to SA I sold 50 remaining condoms to son of Elube at 50 MK he said he wanted to use them and share with his elder brothers (everybody laughed) Then Vanessa started complaining to chief Mudzi B that: second born son of mother of Dorica started proposing me last year, he says he want to marry me and he is ready to take care of my children. I was not happy with this and I told my HB and My HB was angry and wanted to beat him. I told him that you are still young you can not marry me and he said that: do you think that I cannot produce children? I already sold my cotton and am ready take care of you (we all laughed) Ada joined us and she answered that: He is also proposing Grace but Grace refused: Then chief Mudzi B answered that: I think its good for me to go and tell his mother what he is doing and his mother will ask him why he is doing this. Ada answered that: he is doing this because all the girls from this village refuse relationship with him they say that he is not nice even his dressing is not nice (we all laughed)

Vanessa answered that Ada! I saw your ex-HB twice! Coming to chat with you, what are you discussing? Then she answered that: nothing but he was coming to see his child, and he gave me 200 MK, Levison borrowed 100 MK and the remaining 100 mk I bought under wear for my daughter at [nearest tradingcenter]. Kondwani answered that: you need to take care because later on he will give you a baby boy now and Ada said that, yes! I cannot accept to sleep with him. It was around 4:30 pm and I told the women that: Thank a lot I am going home now and Tumanene said Ok! But can you escort me to GVH and I said no problem. When we went there, Tumanene told GVH that: I am going at Mw. village on Monday to stay with my mother. My HB told me that, he will find me there! Then GVH said that Ok! But don’t worry because this is not the end of marriage, Jeneti is a thief she even took my pot
and a plate, when I went there she refused to give me. And she is not happy with you. Later on she
can put poison in your food and its good to go back to your parents have a nice journey. Then we left
and I continued my journey home.

10 MAY 2009 SUNDAY:

In the morning I saw Sofia and 4 grand children of GVH harvesting cotton. Then I saw
Jane coming! She stopped and greeted me. I asked her where she is staying and she said at Balaka
with my HB who plays cards. And as of now he is the one who is buying milk, bread, ndiwo for my
father at the hospital. But my ex-BF at J. village bought this new phone for me 1 500 MK but my HB is not
happy and he says I must sell it and he will buy another phone for me. But the other boy who was
buying fish, (sells vegetables) is still coming to see my grand. But I don’t want him I will see what to
do because am planning to go and stay at Dedza with my HB.

Then I went to fetch some water then on the way I saw chief Mudzi B harvesting cotton with her 2
children. At the borehole I found Pamela washing her clothes when I reached home I started knitting
then I saw relatives of Tinenenji going to the graveyard and they started sweeping.

Then Jasmine passed by! She greeted me and said that: I am going at J. village there is a ceremony for
what I was dreaming about my daughter, (she was with her HB and Trinity).

After lunch I continued knitting then Livia joined me then she started saying that: After abortion
I went for injection and they told me to go on 30 June! And I asked her why she went for family
planning because she said that she don’t have a boy friend now! Then Livia laughed and said
that: I just decided to go although I don’t have a boy-friend.

Then Sofia came and she asked me if I have got onions, and I said sorry I don’t have, and I asked her
what she wanted to cook and she said that: I bought meat (goat) to Aisha) Then Livia
answered that even my mother went to take 1 kg - 350 MK she said she will pay after selling cotton.
Sofia left, Livia continued that: I want to go and sale 15 kg of maize to GVH I want to
buy plates because I don’t have and she continued that even Tulipesi is selling goat meat today and
others will be paying after selling cotton. Then Vanessa passed by with her HB coming back
from the field, they carried 50 kg full.

Sofia passed by she was going to fetch some water she stopped and greeted me. And Sofia said
that: Livia I met with daughter of Rosemary and her friend coming back from a certain
Traditional doctor they said that its their first pregnant and its good to go there because when you
want to give birth a traditional doctor used to give some medicine for some one not to feel pain.
Livia laughed and said that: Even some women from this village can help them. But a lot of
women from this village used to give birth at home but not at the hospital. I don’t know why! Sofia
continued her journey to the borehole and she told Livia that: Please go home because your
mother is not there then a thief can come while you are here.

It was very cold and no-one else joined me knitting.
1842
1843
1844

1843

11 MAY 2009 MONDAY:

Mid night Doris came to ask for the place for her to sleep. I asked her what is wrong and she said that: my brother chased me, I married and my HB came with his relatives to show that he is serious about marriage. Then later on my relatives (Rashida) said that she don’t know about my marriage but she want my HB to come with his elder brother and uncle. (Not believing that the ones who came were the real or the right). And my HB said that: I am going but I will not come. And it’s 3 days since he left. Then today I went direct to my HB to tell him to come back and he refused when I went back home it was already 7 pm and I found my brother cooking nsima, but I just went direct to sleep. Then as I was sleeping a certain boy opened the door and wanted to sleep with me and I refused and called my brother, my brother was angry and said that I told that boy to come while not. But I know that boy he is from [small crossroads market].my brother is angry and he has chased me and I wanted to ask for a place for me to spent this night, so that tomorrow morning I must go to my grand mother at [nearest trading center]. [J: G thinks the boy and Doris agreed that he would come, when other are sleeping. Because she told G that the boy had followed her all the way from [nearest trading center]. Then definitely they must have agreed, he wouldn’t come to her house otherwise. But could have had sex in the bush? May be because she has her own house]. I told Kingsley what Doris was saying and Kingsley said that don’t spend a night here but let us escort her to chief Mudzi B and the chief will see what to do. When we reached there, the chief said that G is renting and if some of your relatives will hear that you spent night there, they can be angry with G. And it’s good for you to go to the chief of your village (Mudzi A). Then Doris went back.

In the morning I saw again Doris coming, I asked her if she went to the chief and she said I didn’t. I just slept in my house and my brother didn’t chase me, As of now I [Doris] want to see if you are still buying maize, I want to sell my 2 bags it 1,500 Mk each so that I can find transport, I want to go to my brother in Lilongwe. [J: But Gertrude didn’t buy.] I asked her how many bags she harvested, and she said 10 bags but I worked together with my brother and we want to share. I asked Doris that: You seem to be pregnant, and what are you going to do? And she answered that: its true but I will just abort. I asked her how she will manage, and she said that: I know the traditional medicine and I have that tree in my field and it helps me a lot because this is not my first time. I asked her to tell me who showed her that tree and she said my friends, I asked her to show me the tree and she answered that: I will show you some days coming. Then Doris started saying that even Charity is pregnant but her HB [the one with whom she stayed in Balaka] chased her he went back to his ex-wife! Then I saw Kingsley - Sofia harvesting cotton in the field of GVH. Then Doris said that, I am going to ask at [small crossroads market] if some one is buying maize, Sofia came to beg salt.

At 10:20 am I heard people singing clapping hands, then Sofia was still harvesting cotton and I asked her what was happening then she said that: Some women from this village gathered at Nyamwale’s house they are telling daughter of Nyamwale how to give birth because its now 8 ½ months and you are not supposed to go there because you don’t have a child. That’s why they are singing and after that they will eat food there. (Sofia laughed and said that Aunt G you like asking).

After lunch I saw women from Mudzi B passing by! They greeted me and said that: Aunt G we are now going at M. village mosque to attend a meeting for all mosques around Mudzi but
it’s only muslims and Kondwani stopped and said that: Aunt G Aunt G my ex-HB came in the morning and he gave me 1000 MK and I want to buy a jersey for my son. And I said no problem then she continued her journey.

1848 At 2:30 pm I went to see what Sofia has been writing, I checked and just encouraged her to work extra hard although she is failing to say exactly thing. I passed by the house of Venesi but she was not there, her daughter told me that she went to fetch some water. Then I passed by Dorica and Modesta, Tinenenji playing cards. Then I continued my journey to Chikondi to see how she has started writing. On the way I met with Saibi going fetch some water. I greeted her and she said that I am fetching some water for bricks, son of Hamra is making new bricks (the one whose wife died) I asked her if it is ganyu and she said no! but when I will be making my bricks, that means Hamra will help me, because I want to build a new house after selling cotton.

1849 Then I continued my journey to Chikondi when I reached there I didn’t find her, her son told me that she went to [small crossroads market].

1850 When I reached home, I continued knitting alone and the woman came from the meeting around 6pm. Meeting at M. village mosque: about elections people didn’t tell others about the meeting or said that only muslims could go, thinking that they would receive something like chitenje, (wrapper), but only received sweets.

1851

1852

12 MAY 2009 TUESDAY

1853 In the morning when I waked up I went to fetch some water then on the way I saw Rosemary and her ex- HB sitting on the veranda. I greeted them and Rosemary told me that: ndikudwala malungo (I am suffering from malaria) since since last week and I said sorry muchile msanga. Still on the way I saw chief Mudzi B harvesting cotton with her 2 children. Then at the borehole I found Tumanene washing her cloths, I greeted her and she said that I will go on Thursday to Mw. village. I have already started harvesting cotton and am waiting to sell but I think I will just come back after p elections.

1854 Then Lovely passed by on the bike, I greeted her and she said that: I am going at the hospital with my children, they are not getting better (eye problem while the other one malaria). I met with Melina. I greeted her and she laughed and said that: go and help your grandmother clearing in the field. She has already started yesterday then Tumanene laughed.

1855 Later on I started my journey to Chikondi then on the way I met with Chikondi coming back from her mother she carried a plate of leaves (dried), I greeted her and she said that: I went to beg to my mother and I asked her why she has started eating earlier dried leaves, and she said that: it is difficult to buy ndiwo nowadays because we have not yet started selling cotton, and it is also difficult to sell maize because we were selling soon after harvesting before keeping in maize storage (nkhouwe) or in bags, when we have kept the maize in nkhouwe we don’t sell because we think of hunger season of knowing how long will the maize be eaten, is it 2-3 months. When people will be selling cotton that means the price of maize will be higher. This year there will be a lot of hunger because a lot of people were growing cotton 2 acres while maize 1 acre thinking that the price of cotton will be high
and they will be able to buy extra maize while not (said Chikondi).

I checked what she was writing and I found a lot of mistakes and I tried to help her by giving her some examples (but I knew that she was busy taking care of the twins) at that time children were just crying and I told her that I will come after 2 days to see if it is clear.

From there I went to the woman who planted ICRISAT g/nuts. Then on the way I found Kondwani and Sofia buying matemba, Aisha was selling tomatoes and she said that it was from her field.

Woman who planted ICRISAT g/nuts: born in 1977, she has 5 children, it is her first marriage since 1993 up to now. She grows crops like maize, cotton, pepper and g/nuts. She sell all the crops except g/nuts.

I started myself with my HB growing our own g/nuts and its 3yrs now, I was just buying g/nuts for planting with my HB. Then last year November Mr Chikombo came and told me about ICRISAT variety and he asked me if I am free to plant, I was happy because, I already knew that there is benefit in g/nuts. In J. village only 4 people are participating and every body planted in her field not together, and I planted with my HB. At Mudzi A 4 families planted at K. village the same. I planted ¼ acre because they brought the seeds very late. Mr Chikombo looked for people who works hard in farming (in their fields) and he just chose 4 people whom he knew already. I harvested 5½ bags (50 kgs) but I have not yet finished harvesting, I was busy harvesting tsabola (pepper) because the price of cotton is low and may be pepper will be high, but I don’t know why a lot of people doesn’t grow pepper.

And I have seen that, I have harvested a lot of g/nuts that before. This variety is good.

No ganyu (casual labour) hired I worked with my HB. Then I told her to work extra hard in farming. Then I [Gertrude] continued my journey to charge my phone, and I asked Daudaa if GVH is in VDC and he said no. Then he continued that he is not participating in VDC but the one who was not working hard was told to continue. Then I went back home.

After lunch I started knitting alone no-one joined me, but Grace passed by and said that the women has gone to attend a meeting (campaign) at [small crossroads market].

13 MAY 2009 WEDNESDAY:

In the morning when I worked up I started washing my blanket. Later on I went to fetch water & found chief Mudzi B washing her clothes. Then Kondwani was telling chief Mudzi B that my HB sent a packet of sugar today and soap. He came early in the morning to see his child chief Mudzi B laughed and said that why is he coming often now, then she said that I don’t know.

On the way back I saw Innocent passing by selling tomatoes. She greeted me and continued her journey - After washing cloths I started reading what I have been writing, checking some mistakes, and writing what I forgot to write. Then a certain boy passed by selling different things, like, jersey, zitenje second hand cloths. According to the weather I stopped him and bought 2 at 700 MK after selling a baby suit at 800 MK to a certain woman from Misomali village I decided to buy.
After lunch I started knitting Livia passed by with a Rasta man, but she failed to talk to Livia me, maybe she was ashamed because she cheated me that the relationship ended. Then I saw Emra with her new HB coming back from Ch. village. Then HB of Sofia called and I runned to give her the telephone after talking to each other Sofia said that Aunt G zikomo akuti abwera mawa (thanks a lot he said he will come tomorrow) Then I asked Sofia that: Why are you not going for family planning and she said that Aunt G I will see. Then I laughed and said that: you seem to be pregnant and Sofia said that: no! no! and I continued that: you slept with him almost four or three times now without any protection how come! May be you are using medicines? And she said no! but when I will have time, you will escort me, and I said that: you always cheat me Sofia you are not serious but you just want another child from him (then she laughed) and I left her washing her cloths and for her children. I found Jasmine, Thokozani, brother of Innocent and mother of Jasmine, playing cards with money. Then Tumanene passed by and said that Aunt G ndapita tidzaonana (I am going, we will meet). And I said that: have a nice journey. Then I received a call from my Aunt in Lilongwe saying that, I am with your mother in Lilongwe I asked her to come for ganyu (casual labour) (kutonola chimanga (shelling maize)). Instead of giving some one, else a bag of maize I decided to give it to your mother, Then I said thanks a lot for helping her, although you failed to give her freely not ganyu (because she is not strong after staying long time at the hospital) Then my aunt didn’t answer anything. I continued knitting alone.

14th MAY 2009: THURSDAY:

In the morning when I waked up I started cleaning my plates, cooking potatoes and sweeping. Then later on I went to fetch some water on the way I saw 3 grand children of GVH harvesting cotton. Then I saw chief Mudzi B with her 2 children harvesting cotton. At the borehole I met with Innocent and Jasmine washing their clothes. I greeted them.

Then Jasmine said that: Aunt G am happy because I bought 6 bags at 750 MK. (How did Jasmine find money for this? HB of Jasmine borrowed money from Sofia’s HB [his son]. Maybe the other money from the grocery?) I harvested a lot of maize but you know that hunger season I was just borrowing money and paid back maize that’s why I remained with 3 bags only. After washing these clothes I want to continue harvesting cotton, and I am planning to buy iron sheets, zitenje, clothes for me and my 2 grandchildren then I will be happy.

Then Innocent answered that: even myself I want to buy clothes. Then Evelin came to draw some water, when she left Jasmine said that: Aunt G this girl is looking nice now, but at the beginning of 2007 before she started taking ARVs she was very thin and weak, but as of now zikuyenda (Innocent laughed) then I went back home. On the way I met with Esnart going to wash her clothes. Sofia came to greet me then she said that I am not feeling good (stomach) and I don’t know what is wrong and am planning to go to the hospital. [Sofia:] On the telephone my HB said that I should go somewhere else at M. village to his friend to ask if he is still selling maize, he want to buy 2 bags for the preparation of initiation ceremony of my dotta , then I said ok, have a nice journey.

At 10am I went to see what Suset has been writing then I found her eating porridge with her dotta. Then I just took the notebook in order to check at home. Then on the way back I met with chief Mudzi B and all the women from Mudzi A and Mudzi B going for campaign meeting at [nearest primary school]. Chief Mudzi B greeted me and said that: we are busy because next week Tuesday 19th we will be voting. Then its good to go and attend the meetings, may be we will receive Zitenje now, because we
already received T-shirts, Kondwani laughed.

After lunch I started translating what Suset has been writing and checking some mistakes. Then Livia passed by and I asked her where she was going and she said that: to chief Mudzi B. I want to divorce, so that I can be free to get married to a new HB. Asked her who is going to marry you? And she said that: Maybe a Rasta man because he is the one who is serious about marriage! But I will see. Then Julia passed by and said that Aunt G I will come and continue learning how to knit and I said no problem. Then Livia said that do you know that her [Julia’s] father-in-law is a traditional doctor? He was staying at the place where my mother built a house. She married [her current HB] then after giving birth to a first child they divorced I asked why? And she said I don’t know but after few months she married to another man and gave birth to 1 child. Later on they divorced and went back to [her current HB] up to now. After this words Livia continued her journey.

At 4:30 pm that’s when the women were coming back from campaign. Jasmine said that everybody is busy. And we just received some sweets not zitenje. And everybody now wants to vote for Bingu wa Mutharika because fertilizer will be 500 MK everybody stopped and greeted me. They told me that: we will vote for Bingu but Sofia? And Kingsley said that: we will vote for Doctor Tembo. (Why? Because when Muluzi was president, Group Village Headmen used to go to meetings and receive cooking oil, ufa, money, sugar, milk. Now they miss these kind of handouts. G thinks GVH also voted for Tembo, because once said that at that time she found lot of money. Chief Mudzi B same, but Kondwani voted Bingu bcoz of cheaper fertilizer.] Then Sofia said that: Tomorrow I will go at Balaka to meet with my HB. He said that he wants to give me the money for maize and I will go at the hospital to see my grand mother and I said that: just greet her (Sofia went back home).

15 MAY 2009 FRIDAY:

In the morning when I waked up I started washing the plates, sweeping and cooking breakfast, later on I went to fetch some water then I saw chief Mudzi B harvesting cotton, Emra was also harvesting cotton. At the borehole I found Tinenenji, Ada and Jeneti washing clothes.

On the way back I met with Chisoni selling oranges, I greeted her and asked where she bought the oranges, and she said that it’s from my mother’s field. She gave me a lot and I decided to sell some. Then I bought for 20 MK Esmart was with Chikondi and Amila they were selling sugar cane and they told me that: we are going sell at [nearest primary school].

Around 10 am Livia came to greet me, then we saw new HB of Pamela passing by with his wife Gettie. Then Livia laughed said that: have you seen now Pamela was saying that: I have found a nice HB who is buying what ever I want, and I stopped pounding the maize by hand but he gives me some money to go to the maize mill to grind. And he said he has a lot of cotton and after selling we will buy maize. Livia continued laughing and said that: Maybe [J: maybe?? G: Mwina... If he would not have had cotton she could have thought he was poor. Other possible reasons according to G: helping in the field, dong A BS... Thinks not for just liking him (laughs when I suggest). First HB took well care of her (= fat, nice clothes), but still she looked for other men. G: Don’t know whether she likes men or money. If it is money, she could have stayed with first HB = son of Jasmine at Zomba] she accepted because he has a lot of cotton. Then boyfriend of Livia passed by (Rasta man) and
Livia said that: Aunt G ndikubwera then she followed him

After lunch Venesi came I greeted her and said that: sorry Aunt G am busy attending seminar at Balaka, gong to fetch some firewood, that’s why you didn’t find me at home for several times. Then I said no problem I just wanted to see what you have been writing.

Venesi said that: I will just send the notebook because [Venesi:] tomorrow I will be busy I am going to attend engagement ceremony then on Sunday, I will go at the same place to attend a wedding ceremony. And I came here to invite you, (Did you go to wedding? No, Jasmine said it’s very far, many have gone so thieves may come, better stay at home). It will be at Chikwere village near [nearest tradingcenter] and everybody in this village will go. It’s for my uncle’s daughter. Then I said OK. If I will have time I will come.

Then she continued that [Venesi]: I wanted to borrow your phone in order to put my sim card mine the battery is low. Then I gave her and she started talking to her boy friend saying that: please come today around 6 pm, its 2 weeks now since you came. And I want to tell you something (I don’t know what the boy friend answered). Then Venesi said “I am gong to beg groundnuts to Elube I want to make nsinjiro, then she continued that: When are you going to start eating your sweet potatoes and I said that: I am waiting for January she laughed and said that: most of the people in this village finished eating their sweet potatoes because they didn’t plant a lot compared to last year. Then she went to Elube. chief Mudzi B came to beg salt.

Then Livia came again! I greeted her and she said that: I was free to chat with my boy friend because my mother and father are not there! They have gone to attend a 40 days ceremony at J. village. And he was telling me that: he want to marry me, and any day he will come with his relatives to talk to my parents, and I told him to cut his hair if he is serious and he said no problem. But he told me that: Venesi told him not to marry me because I am a prostitute and he said that, he can not listen to her. Then Kondwani joined us and Livia stopped talking. Ex-HB of Rosemary passed by. Kondwani greeted him and he said that: I am going to see my ex-wife she is still not getting better, Kondwani laughed and he said that: why are you laughing? Don’t you know that this cold weather is bad? If a man has 4 blankets it is not enough unless the wife must be near by (Is he insinuating that they still sleep together sometimes? Was drunk. May be afraid people will laugh at him for going back to wife after divorcing. G hasn’t seen or heard him go to her house more often).

(We all laughed) Then new HB of Pamela passed by going to Pamela. Then Kondwani laughed and said that: this boy is in relationship with Pamela because his wife has got a 2 months baby boy and he cannot manage to sleep with her that why he proposed Pamela.

At 4 pm it was very cold then Kondwani and Livia left.

Then Mr Ntawanga passed by he greeted me and said that: why are you knitting alone? And I said that women are busy with campaign then he laughed and continued his journey.

Chief Mudzi B passed by I greeted her, and she said that: I went to Balaka with Sofia to see group Village Headwoman and she sent a greeting to you, and I said thanks a lot, then she continued that: she will be back on Monday from the hospital then she left.
At 5:30 pm Sofia came! She greeted me and said that: I am back from Balaka and my HB gave me K3.000.00 to buy maize for initiation ceremony of my dotta, and he bought, soap, matemba, paraffin, and salt and he said he will come on Sunday to spend a night here so that we can discuss about a house that we want to build. Am happy because he is taking care of me and I asked again about family planning and she said that aunt G you like asking me the same question Why? And I laughed and said that: Sorry but I wanted to know if either you are using Traditional medicine or else you want another child! Because you cheated me to escort you at [nearest trading center] hospital for injection. Sofia laughed and said that ndapita. (I am going)

16 MAY 2009 SATURDAY:

In the morning when I waked up I saw grand daughter’s of GVH harvesting cotton. Then Haliday came, she said that: Aunt G I want you to comb my hair because I am going to see my mother and I want to look nice then I did it.

Livia came, I greeted her and she said that: Aunt G I forgot one thing to tell you! My boy friend said that after selling cotton he will buy 1 bag of cement for my house. And he said that we will go together at Kampepuza (Ntcheu) to buy new cloths for me, I am happy because I didn’t expect him to say these words. Sofia passed by I greeted her and she said that: Livia what are you doing there this morning? Your daughter is just crying then Livia left. Later on I went to fetch some water then I saw Kondwani washing her clothes (Kingsley came to borrow a bicycle to go and see GVH [in Balaka hospital to care for son])

Then Chisoni came she told me that. I am selling oranges and potatoes may be you want some and I said yes! Then I bought oranges 50 mk and sweet p 50 MK then she said the potatoes was from her field.

After lunch Kondwani and Esnart came to knit then after few minutes the car passed by for campaign then the women said that: lets go aunt G to attend the meeting (at the big tree). When we reached there we found women already gathered dancing and singing. It was about Muluzi just encouraging people to vote for him. At last the women complained that he just came (Mpaweni) without giving money to people who gathered. Then I went back home to continue knitting Esnart and Kondwani joined me alone.

Then Esnart started saying that Nola was complaining that all the girls [living around her] likes exchanging boy-friend except Molly, but Venesi is in relationship with a man from [small crossroads market] who has a wife Grace is in relationship with a certain man who has a wife from [small crossroads market] and he is between 29-30 years, Pamela is in relationship with a volunteer teacher and she says she is happy because she is now drinking tea, while Grace was just giving her 50 MK while a man from [small crossroads market] is giving her 200 MK for ndiwo. (relish). Evelin is in relationship with HB of Elube and she is just eating fish nowadays. Kondwani answered that: I heard HB of Elube one day saying to chief Mudzi B that Evelin is nice, Mzungu (white person) like Janneke (we all laughed) and nowadays I buy Matemba for 200 MK ½ Evelin ½ Elube. I like having sex with Evelin than Elube because my wife is old now. Esnart said that: But I don’t know why Elube is not angry with the story, Kondwani answered that: but they don’t greet each other. But Molly is just quite and I have never heard that she has a boy friend and one day Pamela was saying that if you say no to a man it’s a sin to God and Evelin used to say that “its good to be in relationship with old men because
they give a lot of money than young boys. They have got the means to find lot of money.”

1894

Pamela serious? “Man is born to propose to anyone he wants, only belongs to his mother, not to any wife. And women are free to accept anyone who proposes. Gertrude thinks serious because this is indeed like Pamela’s behavior. Pamela said this at borehole to other women.”

Kondwani continued that: Gettie heard that her HB is in relationship with Pamela! And she said at the borehole that: when she will get better she will come to Pamela to tell her to end the relations with her HB if not she will beat her. But HB of Elube is just spending his salary to Evelin because she is a new wife. [J: How long has relationship between them been going on? G thinks long time, before we arrived]. Rasta man passed by and Kondwani started laughing and said that: Aunt G have you seen the HB of your friend Livia? At least today he combed his hair (we all laughed) It was already 5 pm then the women left.

1895

HB of Amila came to beg 10 MK for fodya and I said sorry I don’t have then he left.

1896

17th MAY 2009

SUNDAY:

In the morning when I waked up I started cleaning plates, sweeping and cooking my break-fast. Then I went to Livia to tell her that: we should go to fetch some firewood then I found her eating porridge and Sofia was eating potatoes, Livia refused, she said that nowadays a lot of snakes are just moving around there. Then I just went to Amila to buy. Then I found her HB only gone at Liwawadzi to buy sugarcane for sell. And he said that lets, go, ‘I want money for batteries so that I can hear how a elections will be going on, then on the way I met with women from Mudzi B going to attend the wedding at Chikwe village.

1897

Then I bought for 300 MK on the way back I met with Sofia and Innocent playing cards with money. Then Sofia stopped me and said that Aunt G I heard yesterday that Pamela will beat you! Because you are telling people that her new HB went back to his wife and I told Sofia that: sorry I don’t know anything but I will just go to ask. Then Kondwani said that don’t go! But I will go and ask for you. But at the borehole I heard then the Rasta man wants to beat Livia because yesterday they promised each other to meet some where else at night but Livia didn’t go and he is angry.

1898

After lunch Esnart came to knit and she said that: I was thinking that you went to attend the wedding and I said no! I failed because it is very far. Then Chikondi came to give me a plate of sweet potatoes when she was going to the borehole. Then I saw Kondwani coming, then HB of Pamela passed by coming back from Pamela, then Esnart said that this is 3:30 pm he went there at 8:00 am that’s why Pamela didn’t go to attend the wedding.

1899

After 30 min we saw Pamela coming then Kondwani said that I was looking for you Pamela! I heard that you want to beat Aunt G what is wrong? Then Pamela said that I don’t’ know anything but yesterday at the borehole Jeneti, Vanessa and Ada were saying that Gettie from [tiny crossroads market] is angry. She wants to come and beat me because I am in relationship with her HB. Then Kondwani said that OK! I asked you because I have never heard that Gertrude was qurelling with someone else. Then Pamela said that: People are just jealousy with my new HB but he just came himself at home and proposed me and I accepted because I wanted someone else who can help me to take care of my child and indeed I am enjoying because he
is providing what I want. (No-one answered). Then Pamela and Kondwani left. Then Esnart said that: Pamela is my enemy I don’t talk to her because she was in relationship with my HB. Even Grace was trying to come to greet my HB in order to attract him. But my HB was just quite. As of now he said he will send some money for me to go in my home village to make bricks and build my house.

Her child started crying and she said that I am going make porridge I will come to continue knitting tomorrow. Then she left. I stayed alone up to darkness, I was just listening from the radio.

18th MAY 2009: MONDAY:

Early in the morning around 5 am Sofia knocked the door, I greeted her and she said that: Please aunt G my child is not getting better, even at night we failed to sleep then I want you to escort me at a traditional doctor where I used to go and I said no problem. On the way Sofia said that my HB didn’t come last night may be he is busy. Then we passed by Rashida and Hamra harvesting cotton.

Still on the way going to Mudzi A II we saw Elube and HB and 4 sons harvesting cotton. Still on the way Sofia said that: Elube doesn’t know that Evelin is HIV positive and you will see her HB after selling cotton he will spend a lot of money to Evelin. Sofia continued that I want to ask the traditional doctor to give me some medicine for my HB to divorce with his new wife.

When we reached there (Almost 1 hour 10 mins) The Traditional doctor greeted us, he has a lot of livestock, big house with iron sheet roof and married. Then he asked Sofia what she wanted! And Sofia explained that: My child is not getting better his body is very hot as if he is suffering from malaria, and My HB is not coming often at home to see his child and I want him to querell and divorce so that he can come and stay with me. Then the Traditional doctor said that no problem, give this medicine to your child (roots) boil for few minutes and give him to drink for 3 days, but for your HB to divorce come on Sunday this week then Sofia accepted.

On the way back we found Elube still harvesting cotton. Then Sofia said that: Jane has gone to her HB at Balaka the one who plays cards and she said she will not come back here. Still on the way we met with Hamra and she said that I am happy because I have a lot of cotton and 1 harvested 4 bags of Mawere but groundnuts not a lot, [sold a ¼ plastic bag of Mawere to G for 200 MK = 5 MK/spoon for G to take to Lilongwe to make thobwa]. (gruel)

At home I saw Livia coming back from the maize mill. She said that I went to grind this 50 kg. [J: How can she carry that? G: Put on head, are just used. Not to have to go to chigayo often. When finding some money prefer to grind as much as possible, thinking that it may take long before they’ll find money again]. And I will go back with another 50 kg to grind, next week Wednesday I want to go and see my sister at Mangochi and I want to stay there 3-4 weeks that’s why I am helping my mother going to the maize mill. [So that mother will not be without, cannot manage to go herself. (In June Livia still not gone to Mangochi, may be first waiting to sell cotton, says “I will go, I will go’]

After lunch I went to see what Venesi has been writing and I found her [Venesi] coming back from the maize mill with Ada to make ufa oyera everybody carried almost 40 kgs on their heads. Venesi greeted me and I just told her to give me the notebook so that I can check properly at home then she gave me after checking I found few mistakes only that I went on 18th May but she stopped writing on 12th May and I decided to back and ask why she didn’t write for 5 days.

Still at home Rasta man passed by and he asked me where Livia has gone and I said at the maize
mill and he said that ok! Tell her that after selling these beans I will come but I want to chat with her here at your house not to her mother’s house, she said she is afraid of her mother then I said OK I will tell her.

At 3 pm I went to see what Chikondi has been writing then I found few mistakes that before and I tried to give her a lot of examples. Then she said that Aunt G sorry because when I was at school I was not intelligent. I liked Mathematics only, that’s why I am making a lot of mistakes (we all laughed) Then she said that after selling cotton I want to start buying maize for initiation ceremony of my son, as of now I have started a business of selling tomatoes in order to find money for soap and ndiwo. But tomorrow I will vote for Bingu because fertilizer is cheap. Then I went direct to greet Eveles then I passed by Hamra she called me and I went there then she gave me a plate of groundnuts and I said thanks a lot and she said that I want to make nsinjiro, but this groundnut (full basin) I am keeping to plant this season. Then I found Saibi and Filimona, and Levison chatting there, Hamra took another plate of groundnuts and gave Levison, but Saibi and Levison were just touching each other laughing and checking hands, I heard Levison telling Saibi that hug me and Saibi laughed and said that I don’t want can’t you see that all these women are listening to us. (Hamra was just laughing) On the way back, Levison carried me on his bike and he started saying that Aunt G do you know that I quarrelled with my wife? And I said no! and he continued that: I was angry because she said that I am a thief, I took maize 1 tin for Rosemary! While it was not true, she said because I was just drinking beer the whole day, she forgot that I am working. Then I took all my cloths and kept to my mother and I went to stay at Balaka for 4 days, I was staying at a certain resthouse I was paying 100 MK per day! I asked him why it is cheap and he said that because we use candles, a mat and I blanket that’s why. Then I asked him why he went back to his wife and he said that: My mother is the one who told me that she was just crying everyday saying that I must forgive her, that’s why I am back when I reached home he dropped me and continued his journey.

At 4 pm GVH sent a message that she is back from the hospital then I went to greet her when I reached there. She started saying that: we stayed 14 days at the hospital not 40. And as of now the doctor gave me some medicine and he gave him extra medicine to go and keep at [nearest tradingcenter] hospital with a letter. That means instead of going at Balaka to take medicines he will be going [nearest tradingcenter]. I am happy because I am back now and tomorrow I GVH] will continue harvesting cotton, after lunch I will go to vote. Then Friday I will start harvesting rice am afraid that birds will destroy.

Then HB of Esnart called and I runned to give her my phone so that she can talk to her HB. On the way I met with Sofia and Innocent coming from Mudzi A to buy matemba. I found Esnart chopping firewood. After talking to her HB she said thanks a lot. From there I went direct to give the book to Venesi, then I found her chatting with Pamela and I failed to ask her why she didn’t write for 5 days but I just told her that: I will come tomorrow after lunch - (voting).

Then HB of Sofia called asking if GVH is back from the hospital and I said yes she is back. still on the way back I met with Vanessa, Tinenenji, Evelyn and Ada chatting. Then I saw Grace chatting with some boys she greeted me and said that, my daughter has gone to Ns. village to chat with my uncle and she will be back on 5 June 2009. Then I continued my journey and I saw Kondwani and chief Mudzi B, Chisoni, chatting at a big tree. When I reached home I started writing, after that I started checking what I have been writing.
In the morning when I waked up I saw women from Mudzi A going to vote, then chief Mudzi B passed by and said that I will go after lunch because there will be a lot of people there. Then group Mudzi B came to greet me, and she said that I will go after lunch I am going in the field to look for nandolo (pigeon peas) it is matured now. Then she left.

Later on son of GVH came the one who was ill. I greeted him and he said that: thanks a lot G for encouraging me to go to the hospital am getting better and I will follow the instructions that the doctor said. Then he continued that: I will come any day to flash my brother in SA to tell him that: I am back from the hospital and I want to tell him that our mother is still in relationship with that man (her in-law) and he is the one who can talk to her. Then I said no problem I am still here you will flash when you will have time. Then he left.

Then HB of Sofia called me said that: I must tell Sofia to go at J. Village to her In-law to take 500 MK for soap and ndiwo. I told Sofia and she said that thanks a lot aunt G. Then mother of Dorica passed by with 50 kg bag of cotton and Dorica 50 kg bag. They were coming back from the field. Kondwani passed by with nkhwani (ndiwo). (pumpkin leaves relish).

At 10 am I continued knitting, chief Mudzi A with Mr Ntawanga passed by going for elections.

After lunch I started reading what I have been writing and checking some mistakes. At 3 pm I started knitting alone then Lucia joined me, and I asked her if she started Business again and she said that no! as of now my mother has started working at [large commercial estate] harvesting cotton and I stay at home taking care of the children. [J: Has G heard of other people going to work there? Not in Mudzi B (son of Amila), saying there is a lot of work there, they cannot manage to do that. Innocent mentioned it only once when she wanted money for something, but after harvesting she could easily find money by selling her maize].

At 4 pm chikondi and Julia passed by coming back from voting, they greeted me and said that Aunt G your friend has runned to Pamela’s house. Gettie the wife of volunteer teacher is there! I runned with Lucia to see and indeed I found a lot of women from Mudzi B gathered and some boys. Pamela was at the bed-room with volunteer Teacher and Gettie found them with under wears. The teacher was ashamed to go outside then Gettie started fighting with Pamela (no-one stopped them). Gettie told Pamela that you are stupid! You need to find your own HB! Everybody laughed and cheered. Then Gettie told her HB that lets go home [he is allowed back home], Gettie and other woman are mainly angry with Pamela, why didn’t you tell met that you want to get married to another wife. You are doing this because I have a child of a month only. Women [J: Who? G: Mother of Dorica, Kondwani, Sofia, Blessings, Hilda] shouted and said that: Just burn her house she likes sleeping with men who have wives! This is not the first time. Gettie and her HB left, then I saw Pamela coming out of the house sitting on the veranda, everybody laughed. And the women said that this is not good, Kondwani said that we will see a lot of single women now being afraid that they will be caught. She appointed to Evelin, Venesi and Grace. Kingsley laughed and said that: This boy is very young he cannot be in relationship with a woman who gave birth to 4. We all left Pamela sitting on the veranda alone. When I reached home I saw GVH coming and Lucia left. I greeted her and we heard women laughing then GVH said that, the women are just laughing, why are they laughing, Pamela is her own choice, she was proposed and she is free to say yes or no! chief Mudzi B came and told GVH that there is a visitor then she left.

At night 8 pm a certain man knocked the door! I asked him what he was looking for and he said that I am a Rasta man, boyfriend of Livia, I am with my 3 friends, Livia told me to come here and
meet with her. She is afraid of her mother. Then I said that: Please am sleeping and don’t disturb me! Just go direct to her mother, (they were all drunk then he left. From here he went to knock at Thokozani’s house and said that: Thokozani, go and call Livia. She cheated me to meet at G’s house but she is not there. Thokozani told me that: Gertrude, I was angry and I told him to go direct to Livia not at my house. At 8:20 pm Kingsley said that Aunt G just go to her mother now and tell her that: Livia sent boys to meet at night here! That Rastaman stays very far from this village and we don’t know his behaviour may be he is a thief and he can come one day to steal. And Kingsley escorted me. And I explained to her mother what happened and Livia said that: he is not my boy friend I don’t know him. (with angry face). Then Kingsley told Phingi that: Please try to tell your daughter to have a good choice, one day she was chatting here with that Rasta man because you were not here. And now she is refusing. You like gossiping about others but failing to tell your daughter that she is not doing good. (telling Phingi). Phingi didn’t answer anything. Then we left.

In the morning when I waked up I went to fetch some water the I found Pamela [apparently not ashamed to be In publif after being caught with HB of Gertrude] and Grace washing their clothes, on the way back I met with GVH coming back from the field she carried nandolo full basin. I greeted her and she said that: I am going to start harvesting my rice because birds are destroying (then she left).

Later on I saw chief Mudzi B passing by she also carried nandolo (pigeon peas) on her head. She greeted me and [chief Mudzi B] said that: Aunt G have you seen what your friend is doing? And I asked whose friend? And she said Livia. Then she continued that: Levison went to GVH at night and he complained that, Livia went at Mudzi A in the field of Doris, when Florence asked her what she was looking for! Livia answered that: Am looking for medicine in order to abort! Don’t you know that am pregnant and it belongs to Levison. Then I am not happy because I am not the one who impregnated her. (Chief Mudzi B continued that: everybody knows that most of the time Livia used to have sex with Levison) May be Levison is now afraid that the relationship with Charity can end. We will chat later said chief.

At 10 am I started knitting while listening form the radio about elections (Bingu was the highest) Kondwani joined me, she was coming back from the field with nandolo for ndiwo relish full big plate, Elube also passed by with nandolo full big basin.

Then Kondwani said that: I am happy because Bingu will be our president and we will be our president and we will buy fertilizer at 500 MK everybody will manage. Innocent passed by! I greeted her but she didn’t respond, she was going to fetch some water. After few minutes I saw Innocent coming with angry face. Then she started saying that: Aunt G ndinu chitsiru (You are foolish) why are you talking about me. I didn’t answer anything but Kondwani answered that: Innocent we are discussing about elections not about you! No-I have got 2 ears I have heard anything! You are saying that I am a prostitute and I stopped coming here to knit but I just move around with boys. (Said Innocent) and Kondwani said that: Innocent this is not good if you have got some words just say! But not talking like that: Innocent left while she was talking herself. Then I told Kondwani that lets go to her mother and explain what Innocent has done.

When we reached there Kondwani explained to Jasmine, and her father was there! But instead of telling Innocent that this is not good! Jasmine said that: why are you hating Innocent! Innocent has a lot of friends! She can stop coming there because she has a lot of friends.

Kondwani was angry and said that Aunt G lets go I was thinking that Jasmine will sit down with her
daughter and discuss about this story but not that we hate Innocent (then we left).

Then Kondwani went for lunch. After lunch I started knitting alone then Esnart passed by I greeted her, then she said that I am going to buy matemba at Julia. At 4 pm Kondwani passed by! She said that I am going at the grocery to buy matches I cannot buy to the HB of Jasmine, they are all stupid and I will stay 2-3 weeks without talking to that family! They just like gossiping and I said no! Just forgive them. Then she continued her journey. I knitted alone up to evening.

21 MAY 2009: THURSDAY:

In the morning when I waked up I started cooking sweet potatoes, washing plates, and sweeping. Then GVH came greeted her and she said that: I am not getting better, am just feeling very pain my stomach and I want medicine if you have, and I said sorry I don’t have, but just go at the hospital and receive the whole dosage and she answered that: I will go tomorrow when she left Sofia passed by I greeted her and she said that I am going at [clinic] village hospital with my child, he is still not getting better I will go with Vanessa and I said OK that a good idea. Later on I went to see at the grocery if the women are still doing Business, and I found Amila selling sugarcane alone! I greeted her and she said that I am buying this can at Liwawadzi for 60 MK selling at 220 MK, sometimes buying at 180 Mk selling 440 a day or after 2 days. And with the profit am buying maize for food at 10 MK big cup. You know Aunt G that I don’t have maize ¼ only (nkhokwe) (granery) and I decided to be buying. I stopped selling zitumbuwa (maize flour pan cakes) because a lot of women are doing the same business at [nearest primary school] school. In the morning I sell at Nthumna school but in the afternoon that’s when I come to sell here and at night some people used to come and buy.

But do you know that: After selling firewood my [Amila] HB went to drink kachasu (traditionary distilled beer)and when he came back he just packed his clothes went to his village! We didn’t quarrel but he just said ndapita kwathu (I am going home). After chatting with her I went back home on the way back I saw Nola coming back from her dambo she went to harvest rice.

After lunch I started knitting then Grace, Kondwani, and Esnart joined me as we were chatting. Grace said that: Pamela has gone at Ntcheu with her boy-friend. I heard her talking to Venesi that: Keep my maize and my plates, my boy-friend said that: he is ashamed with what happened yesterday because all the children from [nearest primary school] school were there and definitely everybody will be laughing at him. And he decided to go at Ntcheu to his brothers and mother to start a business and we are going together, I will not come [here again]. (We all laughed) and Kondwani said that Pamela is stupid because she used to be in relationship with young boys, for example, the father of her last born child is very young and now HB of Gettie is very young he just have a child of 1 month while Pamela have got 4 but one died when he was 1 months old.

But Venesi said that (aliyense ali ndi ufulu wosankha mwamuna amene a kumufuna) everybody has got the right to choose a partner that she/he wants then Esnart said that: she was saying this words because they are al in relationship with men who have got wives [Venesi’s boy-friend is married at [small crossroads market]. People wonder how he cheats his wife when coming home. Kondwani suggested he buys things for her then to keep her quiet.

Grace continued that: My grand mother Nola was not happy! She went there to tell her that this is not good why can’t you take an example from Molly she has her own HB and her house but she (Pamela) is using the house of Garison (son of Venesi) Then Pamela was angry and left Nola talking.

Esnart continued that: When she was going in the morning she didn’t say good-bye to anyone except
Venesi. May be she will come to sell cotton and Kondwani said that: Gettie was the one who worked with her HB in that cotton field and Pamela cannot come to sell. [Pamela did not plant cotton, she said to Ada once that she will just be watching others sell their cotton.]

1976
And as of now G has gone back to her mother.
1977
1978

Later on Ellesi passed by and the 3 women started laughing. I asked them what they were laughing and Kondwani said that: we heard that the HB from SA who wants to marry Ellesi is back from SA but he is at Balaka to his wife! He promised to come yesterday and Ellesi failed to go to school waiting for him but up to now he didn’t. And her mother was telling anyone that: my son-in-law is coming (we all laughed).

1979

1980

Then Grace sent a certain girl to buy paraffin 50 MK cooking oil 50 MK with 500 MK and Kondwani said that: Grace you have a lot of money up to 500 MK as if you are selling cotton? Where are you getting the money? Grace laughed and said that: don’t ask me. (we all laughed)

1981

1982

1983

It was very cold around 4 pm and everybody left. I continued knitting alone. And I was just listening from the radio about the new president.

1984
22 MAY 2009: FRIDAY:
1985

1986
In the morning when I waked up I started washing some cloths and washing plates then sweeping. After break-fast I went to Venesi to ask why she didn’t write from 12-18. When I reached there I found her [Venesi] taking maize from maize storage putting in bags, I asked her why she was doing that and she said that: most of the time I used to move around to attend seminars and I spent a night there! Then I am afraid that thieves can steal. Then I asked her why she didn’t write, then she answered that: she was very busy and she was just writing on a small piece of paper and as of now she will just transfer from that paper to a note-book then I saw Molly selling tomatoes on the veranda. On the way back Grace gave me 6 egg-plants from her field. When I reached home I started reading what I have been writing. Then I saw GVH coming I greeted her and I told her that Jane will come tomorrow with a visitor then she said ok. And she [GVH] continued that I am still not getting better (stomach) I want to beg 100 MK from you so that I can buy some medicine and for the maize mill my son in SA said that he sent money 10 thousand through daughter of Alma and may be I will receive tomorrow, then I gave her the money.

1987

1988

1989
After lunch I started knitting then Kondwani came to greet me then she said that Auntie sorry I will not come to knit today because am busy fetching water for bricks of the house of my brother in SA I am with my sister (chief) and Vanessa. But have you heard that your friend Esnart has been caught? I said no! then she continued that: on 20th May her son was ill then he slept at the bedroom, then Esnart was chatting with some women at the sitting room! Later on the women saw son of Esnart coming out from the bed-room with 2 condoms already used. Then her daughter 3 years explained that, I will go and take mine I have seen a lot at the bedroom. She runned and came out with 3 condoms. When the women asked her she answered that: I know that my HB is also sleeping with other women in SA and the women continued that: that’s why you chased your in-law here (the man who used the condoms not known). [Women commented it may even be a young boy from this village, like the woman in our house who slept with Garison = son of Venesi.] Kondwani added that: may be the man is from this village because the owner of this house was pregnant from Garison son of Venesi.

1990

1991
Then Sofia passed by I greeted her and she said that my son is still not getting better and I think I will just eat thelele (what was drying) because I don’t have relish then she continued her journey to see
her grand mother. Then Sweetness came to pay 600 MK balance 100 Mk for a baby suit that she told me to knit. And she said that her HB is the one who gave her the money. When Sofia came back from her grand mother, she stopped and Kondwani left. Then Sofia said that Aunt G; father of Livia was getting worried today because Livia has stolen his 1 000 MK and she went at Balaka to buy chitenje and now she told some boys (2) to continue building her house and her mother was angry and said that: you just hate my daughter she is not a thief then her HB said that: where does she got the money because she don’t have enough maize to sell, not yet started selling cotton, no HB! then Phingi was just quite.

Sofia continued that have you heard about Grace? On 16th her new HB [older + fat, I saw him at shop, sometimes spends night, wants her to stop working at shop, married. Same one she is still seeing in June. People say she chats with that boyfriend at the shop everyday, but also another boy came to chat with her there, both may have thought the other is a regular customer. These 2 men were also at same time at her house once (1 in bedroom, other on veranda)] came to chat around 6 pm they were chatting at the bedroom, and at 7 pm her boyfriend [who? Married elsewhere, sent to work here as health surveillance] came and Grace came out of the house and started chatting with the other boy-friend on the veranda. Later on she was afraid that the other HB will ask and she just cheated the one who sat on the veranda that sorry am busy I want to go and fetch some water because tomorrow I will go early in the morning at Balaka then the boy-friend believed and left ( we all laughed) Sofia left and said that: I will come and chat when my child will get better. I stayed alone up to evening.

In the morning I went to fetch some water, then I saw Thokozani and her HB going to harvest cotton on the way back I met with Vanessa going to harvest cotton with her HB. After break fast Sofia came to greet me then she said that Aunt G my HB came and spent a night with me and he said that he want to buy 5 bags of maize for hunger season, and about the house he said that he will start making bricks next week, when he left he gave me 500 MK, Jasmine came to greet him and he asked when will her daughter In-law come to chat from Balaka, but my HB was angry and said that why are you asking me that question while Sofia is here, I am answered that I just wanted to know then she gave her son ½ of 50 kgs of maize (but he didn’t beg. Then I saw Thokozani coming back from the field with 50 kg bag of cotton and Vanessa the same.

Sweetness sent a child to pay the balance 100 MK.

3b most of the people they find it difficult to know the size of their land, because there is no-one else to teach them how to enumerate.
3c others can cheat because they think they can be asked “why they don’t give that land to someone
who can manage to use it.

9a others can cheat because they think that they will receive some food.

9d others can cheat because they think that they will receive a lot of food than others after
mentioning (eg 4 days per week while others 2 days per week.

31a others can cheat because they think that, if they say I have eg plough, etc I cannot be included to
those people who will receive these things. May be they want to give some assets to those who
don’t have.

31c and 31d others can cheat that yes eg a radio at a cheapest price to buy food thinking that they
will receive enough food for them to stop selling assets.

JUNE 6 2009: SATURDAY:

In the morning I went to fetch some water then I found Livia, Evelin and Sofia, Elube, Fissa, Kondwani, chief Mudzi B, fetch some water I greeted everybody and Livia said that: aunt G, Emra
has got a cell phone (Zain 1 500) her HB bought for her. After selling cotton, I will buy mine.

Ex-Hb of Rosemary passed by the women started laughing and Fissa said that I saw him very early in
the morning going to J. village he said he went to sell cotton at 30 per kg - for 300 MK he wanted
more to buy beer then Kondwani said that he is failing to keep his cotton and sell on Monday 8th June.
He went early in the morning so that Rosemary should not see him. Then Livia begged the women to
fetch some water quickly because she wanted to go at J. village to attend a certain ceremony for
her sister who died, her cousin from Liwonde is the one who prepared. Elube and Fissa
laughed and said that why didn’t you make the ceremony here at Mudzi B village? Because she had a
lot of friends for this village and the graveyard is here. You want to eat with some people of another
village, you will see that you sister will not receive that sacrifice and she will tell you to make another
ceremony here. (people laughed) on the way back Livia told Fatima that: I will go with my 2
children at the ceremony (the women laughed asnd Elube said that, but when you want to go to
Balaka you always leave the child with your mother, but in other places you always go with your
children. May be there is some one else at Balaka whom you didn’t tell that you have a child? You
need to be open tell him that I have a child and he can be free to tell you if he has a child. Livia
smiled and didn’t answer anything.

When I reached home I saw Ellesi and passing by. I called her and she came then I greeted her and
I said that who is the man whom you escorted on Wednesday then she said the one who wants to
marry me. I asked her how it is going on and she said that: on that day I came back at Mz. village
(moyo wathanzi restaurant) he was going to B. village I asked Ellesi if he is married and she said
that I don’t know and I didn’t ask him but he said that: he will come today with his uncle as a
witness. I asked Ellesi if she will continue school and she said that yes I will do. I asked her when she
will go to visit his parents and she said that I don’t know but next week Monday we have got a mid-
term holiday for 2 weeks then he said that we will go and stay together in Lilongwe because he came
here at Balaka just to visit his parents but he stays in Lilongwe. I asked her that does it mean that
you have married? And how are you going to prevent from pregnant because you are still at school?
Ellesi answered that: Aunt G you are just asking me a lot of questions am going just keep your
questions I will answer you later. But give me your telephone number so that I can call you when I
will be in Lilongwe then she left. GVH came to greet me and I gave her money for rent then she signed. Kondwani passed by. I greeted her and she said that this is the daughter of chief Mudzi B who stays in Lilongwe area 24. She came to see her mother then they continued their journey. In the afternoon I started knitting then no-one joined me. Kondwani sent a message to her son that tell aunt G that I will not come am busy fetching water for bricks.

7 JUNE 2009:
In the morning I started washing my cloths after that I went to fetch some water at the borehole. Then on the way I met with Livia. I greeted her and she said that I am going to attend another ceremony at J. village. Then Livia continued that my brother at J. village has found a place at Ch. village (he bought) and he is going to start staying there with his wife. He said he don’t want to stay in the village of his wife and not here at Mudzi B. [Why? Don’t know ..... G thinks may be too big responsibility to take care of all her relatives. If her mother is not drinking tea, easy to steal from shop for daughter. Causes quarrelling to live with parents of either side or HB.] At the borehole I met with Emra I greeted her and she told Livia that any day I will go and stay at Ch. village with my HB but I will come here in rain season to plant maize in my field, my HB is the one who told me. He said because of his business (selling fish) Its good to stay near the lake am not getting worried because my uncle is at Ch. village and she started saying that: my HB sent 600 MK when you was in Lilongwe and a packet of sugar and my shoes. Am happy because he is taking care of me. Ellesi passed by and Sofia said that Ellesi wants to stop school and get married to that man her mother is the one who is encouraging her. She is saying that its good to get married to a man who is working in SA [but Lilongwe? May be SA was cheated HB says Lilongwe others B. village] bcoz he will be able to take care of her by buying what she wants eg soap, lotion and some clothes.

Then I asked Sofia if the relationship of Kingsley is still going on. Then she said that: yes and the day that she spent a night here my grand mother told Kingsley to spend a night at iron sheet house with his girl friend while the girls spent a night in another small house. But it’s not good for them to spend a night together because when she will be pregnant that means Kingsley we have a big responsibility of taking care of her. Or may be because he has a lot of cotton and he will manage to take care of her. Then Sofia continued her journey to see her grand mother. [Why would GVH have encouraged them to sleep together? May be to get him married quickly, since he is just staying. Just like she encouraged Jane to get married. Raising children waiting for them to get married. Sofia also married very young.]

After lunch I started knitting then HB of Venesi passed by. Later on Sofia came to chat then she started saying that: Since Wednesday boy friend of Grace is spending a night here in this village may be they are married now Rosemary passed by then Sofia said that: She (Rosemary) is now going to start staying at [nearest tradingcenter]. She went to a chief and begged the place of now she has already started collecting some grasses for a roof. [Chased by GVH because of Ndaba. G thinks Thokozani and Levison will stay because he is from this village.]

She also continued that Rebecca has got a baby boy. She didn’t go to the hospital to give birth! But some where at [large commercial estate] to a traditional doctor. I asked Sofia why Rebecca didn’t go to the hospital and she said that I don’t know. Later on Sofia left.

8 JUNE 2009: MONDAY:
In the morning I went to see if they have started buying cotton but not. People said that the price will be 75 MK may be tomorrow. After 40 - 60 minutes everybody left.
Later on Kondwani came and said that Ellesi has paid 700 MK for marriage and she has now gone to Lilongwe with her new HB. The HB told Ellei to stop school and her mother agreed and he told Lovely to see if Ellesi will be going to school yesterday he spent a night with Ellesi in the house of her mother and her mother killed a chicken cerebrating that her dotta has married. Chief Mudzi B went there to tell Ellesi how to take care of the family. Eg respecting him washing his cloths cooking and cleaning at the bed-room everyday. [ Is a man also advised when marrying? Went to advice Ellesi because has never been married before, said chief Mudzi B. HB is told not to have other wives now that he is married, buy soap and salt for wife and chitenje when she is pregnant. Has to treat her as his mother - with respect (and Vice-versa). He came with his uncle, also Ellesi's uncle was there.]

Kondwani continued that: we heard at the beginning that he is from B. village, and later on they said that he is working in SA as of now they said he is staying in Lilongwe but up to now we don’t know whether he is married or not. Her mother (Jeneti) and Lovely encouraged Ellesi to get married and [Kondwani:] as of now Jeneti is in relationship with elder brother of Sofia and nowadays he is spending a night there but he has his own wife at J. village I don’t know why Jeneti is doing this! She knows that she is HIV/AIDS [in Chichewa ali ndi matenda a Edzi] but she just want to spread the disease. The same as Evelin she know that she is taking ARVS but she is in relationship with HB of Elube Later on Kondwani left.

At 2 pm Chikondi and Kondwani and GVH came to chat, then Rashida passed by then Chikondi said that: the grand daughter of Rashida is loosing weight because her mother (Monya) used to be at school from morning up to be at school from morning up to late afternoon and today at the hospital the doctors said that the child is very young and she is lacking milk from her mother. Just tell the owner of the child to continue school next year and this year she must take care of her child otherwise the child can die. But Rashida said that am afraid to tell Monya because she cannot accept, she will think that I don’t want to help her taking care of her child.

GVH said that, at Mudzi A they have started Adult school today and here in Mudzi B Venesi told us that we will also start today! Some women gathered at a big tree waiting for Venesi but she didn’t come, and Molly said that her boy friend has come they are just chatting instead of telling us to go back home and start learning tomorrow. This is not good said GVH. GVH also attending adult school? Yes, proudly came to show to G that she can now write the names of her children in SA, want to learn G’s name too. Kondwani encouraged her: First names, and later you will be able to write them letters.]

Later on GVH and Kondwani left then Chikondi said that I am going to fetch some grasses for the new room for my house.

At 5 pm boy friend of Livia (China shop) called me and he said that Aunt G am the one who sells in China shop at Balaka I met with Livia last week and she said that: she will come here on Thursday and please tell her not to fail on that day and I said OK! I will tell her. Then I went to tell Livia, then she answered that: Its true aunt G am still in relationship with him and I told him to meet that day. Then I went back home.

In the morning I went to fetch some water then at the borehole I met with GVH and Jeneti, then I heard GVH asking where Ellesi has gone. Then Jeneti answered that she has gone at B. village to stay with her HB. Then GVH asked that: is there anyone else from this village who went there to see the
place? Jeneti answered that no but we will arrange about it.

When I reached home Sofia came and she started saying that: Innocent and Jasmine told me that tomorrow they want to take 1 door from my house because Innocent cannot buy a new door while her sister (who died) left the house with a door, then I want you, to flash my HB so that I can explain to him. Then I flashed but can’t be reached then she said I will come later. [What happened with HB/door? June 11: Door indeed moved. Sofia still trying to flash her HB via G.]

Later on Kondwani and Sofia came. Sofia said that I should braid her hair then, I did it after that I started playing bawo with Kondwani then she started saying that: Hb of Chisoni sent a cell phone and Chisoni is now very happy. Then a certain boy passed by and Kondwani said tat, HB of Doris is back now and at least he is managing to take care of her because I saw Doris with new chitenje and shoes.

Then Jasmine come and she said that Aunt G my son from J sent a cell phone for me (1 500 MK phone) and I want you to teach me everything little by little. As I was teaching her a certain man passed by and he said that am exchanging salt with maize, and he was going to Mudzi B. Jasmine continued that I am very happy because I will be talking to my sons and daughters. It was very cold land everybody left. Later on I saw a man who passed by exchanging salt with maize coming back with ½ bag of 50 kg. 1 cup of salt for 2 cups of maize.

For transcription of conversation 2 see G’s notebook 4.

Gertrude Finyiza, June 1 2009

When I met with Janneke, she first explained what a research is & I was interested. After an interview I didn’t expect that I can be chosen, according to the way that others dressed (nice clothes, hair style). I was thinking that maybe I will not find a chance to get employed because most of the bosses used to employ someone who is related to them, or after the interview some people used to give some money to the boss in order to be employed.

But when I reached at home I started thinking that: the one who interviewed me is the owner of the research, definitely she will choose whom she wants. And indeed my phone ringed one day with a new number & a new voice. And I was very happy when I heard about the salary because I knew that after the research I will go to a college to study what I wanted.

When I met with Janneke for the second day she told me some of the questions that she wanted to ask in the village chosen. Later on we went for shopping, preparing our life in a village. Then the third day that’s when we went to find a house in a village chosen.

Although Janneke explained what she wanted to find out in the village, I was thinking that I will not manage because it was my first time to do research. When we started staying together in the village some women from the village asked me if at night I sleep well without being afraid that I am staying with mzungu. Others said don’t you have bad dreams at night & I said no! We all have the same blood from God, we just have different colour of the skin.
I was happy when I was with Janneke because she was asking me about some of the questions that she wanted to ask to the women if it was necessary to ask or not.

Janneke liked to ask a lot of questions about how relationship starts/ends, farming, AIDS, condoms. But I knew that she wanted to understand because she was not born in Malawi. Congratulations to Janneke because she had a good idea of staying a long time in the village doing research in order to see with her eyes & hear with her ears about the truth how people in the village find their needs. Not like what others did, coming in the village asking some questions that are difficult to answer e.g. how many times do you sleep with your wife or girlfriend/husband/boyfriend. Definitely everybody did not say the truth doing research for only a day. I was not interested with them (Bridge for Kit). People in the village complained that a lot of visitors come to our village, and ask a lot of questions but without benefit, at least Janneke gave us salt & soap.

When I was alone in the village women were free to come & chat in the morning before lunch & after lunch & free to talk about themselves and about others e.g. if someone is in relationship with a married man, if someone was caught somewhere doing sex, they were free to talk. Even without asking them they just started explaining.

The women in the village were interested in knitting, playing bawo game, braiding hair. They were coming everyday to chat while knitting. But soon after harvesting most of the women stopped coming because they had a lot of food to eat, busy cooking while before it had been hunger season & they were trying to find something else to do in order to forget about hunger. Later on in stead of knitting they were busy with playing cards by contributing either money or maize per game.

When Janneke came back a few women were coming to knit but others not! When I was alone outside our house chatting with the women (knitting) they were free to talk & laugh. But when Janneke joined knitting most of the women were just quiet, not saying different stories, I think because they were thinking that: if I will say this story about such a girl, Janneke will ask me some questions because she likes asking.

In the village when I was chatting with 2-3 women it was easy to catch a lot of stories than 5-8 because everybody used to be afraid of her friend. They will think that: if I will say this story definitely one of the women amongst the group will go & tell others & it will cause quarrels. I was disappointed when some of the women stopped knitting but I think it was due to lack of interest.

When we were asking the women some questions that Janneke formed, it was difficult for some of them to say the truth e.g. how many bags of maize did you harvest last season. They said 2-4 instead of 5-10 thinking that if they mention a lot of bags, that means they will not receive extra maize.

Most of the young girls in the village don’t go far with education because most of the parents don’t encourage those children to work hard. Most of the young girls in the village get married quickly because they don’t know the benefit & it is because most of the girls didn’t go up to secondary school. Most of the young girls have never seen someone from their village more educated and employed which is difficult for them to know the benefit.

Most of the women in the village used to exchange husbands because they don’t have someone else to help them taking care of the children, someone to buy what they want e.g. soap, body lotion,
paraffin, salt. And no one to help them to build a house, a toilet, a kitchen. They don’t think that if they can start a business their problems can be solved. But still other women they do some business but they just get married to different men. Most of the women in the village are afraid of going for blood testing. I think it is because they know that they married several times & even their husbands have got extra wives somewhere else & they just think that they are HIV positive. Others they think that if I will go for blood testing & found positive definitely everybody in the village will talk about me. Most of the women in the village have got children from different fathers because of early marriages. I think it is good for parents to have time every night explaining to their children how life in the past was & telling them how bad early pregnancy is & they need to tell them that HIV/AIDS leads to death & poverty.

People in the village grow crops like maize, cotton, groundnuts, pigeon pea, millet, sorghum & they have livestock like goats, pigs, pigeons (dove), chickens. A lot of the women in the village depend on casual labour (ganyu) to buy their needs like soap, body lotion, salt, paraffin. Some of them grow crops for food & sale, especially cotton & maize. In hunger season they depend on (boiled) mangos, leaves from the bush, porridge & eating nsima once per day.

My opinion is that he government must send some people who are trained in any organization to go in villages for counselling & encouraging them to work hard in farming or business although they are not educated through counselling (once a week) they can change & improve in everything like: choosing a good partner, working hard in the field, working hard in business.

With this research I have learned that:

- Early marriage leads to poverty
- It’s good to go for blood testing before & in marriage
- Abstain & listening to elders
- Not to have a lot of boyfriends, it will lead to HIV/AIDS & other diseases, lazy to work hard in the field thinking that he will help by giving you some money to hire someone to help.
- Good to use condom than injection to avoid both HIV/AIDS & pregnancy.
- It’s good to go far with education like Janneke in order to have a good future.

I need to say thanks a lot to Janneke for staying in the village to see the truth rather than just sending someone to see only for a few days. Thanks a lot because I have got what I wanted - money to continue school and I have also learned what life in the village means.

Lived in village before? Indeed, in my village it was 2001 & a lot of girls & boys were going to school & working hard but when I went back in 2006 that’s when my mother told me that things have changed. Most of the girls stopped school because of pregnancy while others are getting married after finishing primary level but not going up to secondary school. My mother said that maybe because they are just copying what their friends do by getting married early. If they see a married woman putting on new chitenje or new clothes they think that in marriage they can find what they want not knowing that if they work hard at school they can be employed somewhere or they can be
able to start a business & get what they want. As of now I have stayed in this village for a long time & I have known that most of the girls don’t go to school because they don’t know the benefit.

2092 How did you feel about telling the stories that the women and girls told you to me? I was interested because I knew that you wanted to know & understand about their life.

2093 What kind of things did you find difficult? Most of the things that I find difficult in this village is that if you chat with someone else (woman) for a long time e.g. 2-3 days they start gossiping. They think that I will give her something either salt or soap, or else they think that the woman will be telling me about others in the village especially their behaviour (difficult to find a real friend in the village). E.g. chatting with Innocent then Sofia angry - chatting with Kondwani, then Innocent angry - chatting with Esnart, some women gossiping that she want to be talking about others.

2094 What have you enjoyed most? What I have enjoyed most is that: staying with mzungu in the same house. I have seen how relationship goes in the village e.g. buying soap for each other. I have also enjoyed by hearing what makes some people to divorce in marriage; buying leaves at the cheapest price; fetching firewood not buying. I am able to plant different crops on my own not depending from my mother e.g. pumpkin leaves, maize, groundnuts, msewula, pigeon peas, sweet potatoes.

2095 Counselling should be enforced on people, if not cooperating chief should expel them from village (after I comment that people may not be interested to follow the counselling meetings G advises, just like the Adult school classes).

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2097 COTTON SELLING SEASON

2098 12 August 2009

2099 On the way to Balaka I saw Hamra selling cassava at [small crossroads market], and I didn’t see Grace selling in the grocery but there was a new face. Still on the way I saw the kraal for goat keeping in Mudzi A with iron sheets.

2100 Then I went direct to GVH to tell her that I have come for few days. And she is now staying in the house where we were renting. She is staying with her son (father of Jane) but he is very ill now. And her grandchildren were staying in the house where GVH was staying but they are eating together. She said that she moved because the house was too small for her.

2101 Then I went to Sofia, I greeted her and she started saying that after 40 days from the day that my HB died (after the ceremony) I will go and stay in one of the houses of GVH, but I will be cooking my own food, I asked her what happened to her HB and she said that I will tell you tomorrow. I asked her how many bags of maize does she harvested and she said 3 and I will
eat up to December. Then Jasmine and chief Mudzi A came to greet me and they said that:
at J. village vendors started buying cotton at 10mk per kg, and Rosemary moved to F. village
with Mphatso her daughter.

Chief Mudzi A continued that, [large commercial estate] started buying cotton on 10 August at 42mk per
kg, but the police is moving around checking at what price are they buying. People in the
village were not going to sell because they were waiting that the price will be at 75mk, but
[large commercial estate] said that they will stop buying on 15 August and people decided to go and sell. Chief
Mudzi A continued that Chinese people said they will buy at 75mk and they came with empty
bags giving some people to fill there cotton.

He continued that Florence harvested 3 bales of cotton and she only sold 3600mk
because she hired a car at 1500mk thinking that she will sell a lot of money. Mrs Musitafa
(mother of Florence) harvested 7 bales but she is waiting for the price to be high. Sofia
continued that a lot of people harvested a lot of nandolo, but men from other villages are
coming to exchange pots with nandolo and a lot of women in the village exchanged, Kondwani
, Molly, Auleria, and chief Mudzi B (said Sofia). Chief Mudzi A answered that I
planted cotton 10 ridges only but I planted nandolo one small plate, but I have sold 2000mk
because vendors are buying at 70mk. Jasmine answered that: I harvested 2 bags of nandolo
and I gave 1 bag to my son at J. village to sell and buy maize, but the other bag I just kept for
ndiwo.

Chief Mudzi A added that Kondwani rented a field to my friend 1 acre at 3000mk but she
don’t have enough land to cultivate and as of now she only have 2 bags of maize, why can’t
she grow a lot of maize the whole field than renting to someone but Sofia said thatr maybe
Kondwani will buy extra maize after selling cotton.

Then chief Mudzi A went back, then Innocent came to greet me. I asked her how things are
going on and she said that, pang’onopang’ono. I rented my field to headteacher of [nearest primary school] at
1800mk ½ acre, I asked her what she used and she said that, I bought clothes for myself and
my children, I asked again about her boyfriend and she said that I will tell you tomorrow.
Then she continued that Pamela is now staying in the village of her HB
where Gettie was staying and she already paid 700mk to the chief.

I asked both Innocent and Jasmine abut Rural Finance and they said that they didn’t receive
loan because everybody failed to give a deposit, and about adult school people are not
attending because Venesi is busy with her new HB.

HB of Haliday and HB of Lovely came from south Africa to see their wives, but HB of
Lovely came with 1 blanket, 1 bicycle and few clothes (said Sofia). People laughed and
said that he stopped working and started stealing and he was in prison, that’s why he came
without a lot of luggage and he is very thin than at the time when he was staying in the village. As of now he is ashamed and he has gone to do a BS at Liwonde selling and catching fish and Lovely followed him, but her children are staying with her mother. No initiation ceremony for girls in the village because the day when they were supposed to be initiated it was when the HB of Sofia died, said Jasmine.

GVH came with angry face asking why I decided to stay with Sofia not her and I said that no reason I just decided myself. Then at 8:38 pm we slept, Jasmine (HB has a wooden bed, but no matras, instead an, empty maize bag), Sofia and sister of Innocent [came from Blantyre] who came to attend the funeral we slept in the same house. (on the one mat, sharing one blanket, also using our chitenje)

Those who sent their sons for initiation are: Chikondi, Blessings, GVH sent the grandson, Naima sent her young brother, everybody is putting on chitenje that you gave, but Amila and Julia made dresses for their children. (everybody liked it, they were telling other people from other villages that they received zitenje in their village)

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Back

2110 13 August 2009

2111 Still at night Sofia said that Kingsley harvested 3 bales of cotton and Rashida 2 bales of cotton. I asked about Grace and Jasmine answered that she stopped selling in the shop because one day the owner of the HB [= wife] found Grace at the shop and started fighting then Grace injured and the owner of the shop was angry and employed another girl. And the relationship with that man ended. [Now in relationship with other boy, want to open a nursery school at 250mk per month per child at Nd. village, boy from scale - maybe for women with HB in SA] Sofia continued that am happy because am not pregnant, I was expecting that I will be pregnant but am lucky.

2112 In the morning I helped Sofia sweeping then after that we went to fetch some water then on the way we saw XXX, I greeted her and she said that my marriage ended but as of now I have a big wound near the vagina, I asked her what happened then she answered that the wound started on its own. I asked about Esnart, Sofia answered that she moved to her village, she is busy building her house and after that she will go to South Africa. Still on the way to the borehole I met with HB of Naima I asked him about cotton and he said that buyers will come to Mr Ntawanga’s house and everybody will sell there, the problem is that [large commercial estate] is very far we cannot manage to carry our cotton and sell there, but Chinese people are the one’s who will come to buy here because they already distributed empty bags in the village and everybody packed, then still on the way I saw old woman (mother of Chief Mudzi B) clearing her field. Then at the borehole I met with Hilda she greeted me and said that your friend Ada has gone in the field this morning. She has started clearing the land, she want to grow different crops on her own field not with me,
and I just gave her 1 acre part of my field, then I said that just greet her for me. still at the borehole I met with Aisha, Florence, Nola and Hamra, they greeted me and I told them that Janneke is greeting you all and they said thanks a lot and greet her back. I asked them what is going on about cotton and they said that [large commercial estate] is buying at 42mk per kg but its very far people cannot manage to go and sell but Chinese people will come in the village to buy at unknown price. But Nola said that if it is 42mk I will not sell my cotton, but I will just keep it for next season because a bag of nandolo people are selling at 4000mk while cotton is less amount.

On the way back Sofia said that my in-law (elder brother of my HB) is the one who said he will build a house for me but next year. And Thokozani with Levison also moved to F. village, I saw all their houses without a roof.

At 8am I went to wash my body then after that we ate porridge with Sofia and her children, then later on I saw HB of Sweetness passing by with his friend saying that we are buying nandolo at 80mk per kg and Innocent sold 1kg. I asked her what she wanted to use with the money and she said soap. Then Sofia said that aunt G did Livia told you that she married only for 2 weeks then I said no! then she continued that may be she will explain to you because one day I just saw a certain man but very old coming out of her house and when I asked her she said that am married but after 2 weeks the man left. I don’t know what happened but she will explain to you.

Then I started my journey to Mr Ntawanga just to be sure if the buyers will indeed come and at what price. Then on the way I saw 3 bales of cotton at the veranda of Rashida when I reached to Mr Ntawanga I saw 5 bales of cotton, Mr Ntawanga greeted me and I asked him who is the owner of the cotton and he said its mine but the buyers will come tomorrow at Musitafa’s house to buy at 42mk (Chinese people) they have failed to buy today because they are buying at a certain village, about iron sheets kraal Mr Ntawanga said that the FIDP brought the iron sheets and he continued that at [large commercial estate] is very far that’s why people failed to sell there but the price is just the same.

Then I turned back and started my journey to [large commercial estate] (how far? 1 hour, 10 minutes) but Livia and Innocent said that we will escort you and I said no problem. On the way Innocent explained that she sold her cotton at 20mk per kg to vendors and she had 15 kgs and she got 300mk and with the money she bought grasses for the roof of her house at 300mk and she paid 200mk to the one who was making a roof and that 200mk she borrowed from her father. Livia said that those vendors were hired by the one who has a maize mill at J. village and she continued that she sold her nandolo at 500mk to vendors who are passing by and with the money she bought skirt and shoes at Balaka market, but she stopped going for tailoring because they are not receiving a sewing machine. Then I asked Innocent what happened to her brother who died and she explained that he came one day to see his children and Sofia complained to him that he is not providing enough money to take care for the children and GVH was
there, when they were quarrelling GVH said that its good to divorce because Sofia’s brother who is in SA found a new HB for her, after the quarrel, son of Jasmine went back to Balaka. Then he went to Zomba to sell his second hand clothes, then on the way back there was a car accident then he died through that accident but Jasmine and her eldest son who transferred to Ch. village went to a traditional doctor to find out what happened to HB of Sofia and the Traditional doctor said that GVH is the one who caused that accident so that Sofia should get married to a new HB (it was difficult for me to believe that GVH caused the accident because everybody who was in that car died).

Still on the way Livia continued that Suset started working at [large commercial estate] and she is receiving 5000mk per month (selecting unwanted things in cotton)(Livia thought that Suset will start prostitution because at Toleza they work both men and women and they will be meeting on the way to work or after work) Then near [nearest primary school] we met with car from [large commercial estate] packing cotton, I talked to the driver and he said that we are buying at 42mk per kg and some people are failing to bring their cotton at [large commercial estate] because its far that’s why we are moving with our car but if you want to know a lot just go at [large commercial estate] farm and they will help you.

Then I continued my journey, Livia continued by saying that vendors started buying nandolo at 40mk per kg but as of now they are buying at 80mk, she also said that her father have got 5 bales and he is waiting for [large commercial estate] car to sell.

Then I asked Livia if she indeed got married and she said that yes but he came with HB of Elube looking for a wife from M. village village and I accepted because am failing to find money to buy soap. We stayed only 2 weeks and he just cheated me that he is going to Balaka but up to now he didn’t come back and I just heard that he found another wife at M. village and he is married there. As of now I will not get married but I will have a boyfriend who can manage to give me some money to buy soap. I asked her why she didn’t decide to start a BS and she said that I cannot manage. And I said that if you are failing to start a BS how can you manage to work in someone’s house in Lilongwe and she said that you will teach me and I just told her that it is difficult to find a job in Lilongwe and she answered that ok! I will see what to do.

At [large commercial estate] the security guard directed me to the buyers and I saw a lot of people selling their cotton but not from our villages (Mudzi B and Mudzi A) and I saw the owner of the maize mill with a big car full of cotton selling there and one of the buyers told me that they started buying on 8th August 2009 at 42mk because different farmers were going there to complain that there cotton will be damaged in rainy season because it is difficult to keep and Great - Rex company and Chinese people are buying at 42mk at Balaka district and others are buying in different villages but rumours said that Bingu will start buying at 75mk through ADMARC but they were not sure.
And that buyer continued that if other buyers like Chinese will raise up their price that means Tolezafarm will also raise up, but they will finish buying on 17th or 18th August. He also continued that the govt promised to buy at 75mk but they are not sending their buyers to buy at that price. But others like Cagrill company, Iponga failed to buy because of the price and they promised to buy at 100mk next season.

On the way back [large commercial estate] car picked us up to [nearest primary school] school they were going to buy at [nearest primary school] village. Then on the way back I saw the field of daughter of Alma already cleared. Then I saw Sweetness breast feeding her baby I asked her when he was born and she said 26 August (baby boy) and she explained to me that she has already started clearing in her field. Still on the way back I saw a boy carried pots and plastic basin exchanging with nandolo I asked him how the exchanging is going on and he said that 10 litres bucket = a small pot or a small basin and indeed I saw GVH exchanging her nandolo with a basin. I asked her how much she harvested and she said 1 ½ bags.

I asked Livia how the relationship of chief Mudzi B is going on and she answered that one day chief Mudzi B came to spend a night with my brother in my house then my brother gave me 300mk to give her. Then the following day my brother went back to his wife and up to now he is not coming back and chief Mudzi B is complaining that it seems as if she is pregnant (missed menstruation).

Then I found Sofia already cooked nsima, I bought beans and I told her to cook when I was going to [large commercial estate] but we ate together with Jasmine and Innocent.

At 3:20 pm I started my journey to [small crossroads market] to see how things are going on, then on the way I met with Doris I greeted her and I asked her about her HB and she answered that they started staying together again and Rashida accepted. And on 16th August she will move to her HB’s village, her HB is the one who said that they should move and grow maize there because here at Mudzi B they don’t have enough land to cultivate. Still on the way I saw Elube chatting with Hamra and she was explaining that Lovely has followed her HB at Liwonde where he is doing BS and her children are with me, said Elube and they continued that I sent HB of Fatima to sell 1 bale of cotton at Ch. village while waiting for the buyers to come and buy in the village. Hamra answered that even Vanessa and Amila went to sell at Ch. village (but they didn’t know if they really sold there).

Still on the way I met Magda and I just greeted her and said that Janneke sent a greeting. At [small crossroads market] I met with Grace chatting with her friend I greeted her and she said that I am fine. I asked her why she is not selling in the shop but she said that I stopped because the owner of the shop wanted to have sex with me and I refused, then he told me to stop working and she
went at [small crossroads market] just to chat.

Then at [small crossroads market] I saw 2 women selling dried fish, 6 women selling cassava, 4 women and 2 young girls selling mandasi, 1 woman selling kanyenya, 5 women selling tomatoes but 1 man selling sugarcane, 22 men selling second hand clothes at 20mk, 50mk and 70mk, 100mk a lot of girls were busy moving around at the market, few men and few women were moving around asking the price of different things.

On the way back I saw Teleza with a certain man going to her house but she seem to be pregnant, I greeted her and I continued my journey back home. Then I met with wife of Mr Ntawanga carried a goat, I greeted and she started saying that, after selling cotton she wants to buy cloths for the family and she will even sell 2 goats, with the money she wants to buy ironsheets for her house. When I reached home I met Nola and asked her about (her grand dotta) Grace and she said that she stopped working because she was fighting with the wife of the new HB and her boss was angry and told her to stop working (just the same as Jasmine and Innocent said) I found Innocent cooking nsima for the family with nandolo (ufa woyera) I asked her about Teleza and she said that she wants to get married to a certain man from a certain village (not known) and she is pregnant. She said that she heard this from Suset. I asked about the property of her brother who died and she said that before he died he said that he opened an account and there is 240 thousand but it should be for the children of Sofia to build a house and for food. And 4 chairs should be for the children of Sofia but some of the second hand clothes that he left should be sold and with the money they should buy some food for the 40 days ceremony, as of now the ATM card is with Jasmine but as soon as he died her wife at Balaka went to the bank and took 35 thousand in secret before giving the ATM card to Jasmine and she was told that she will not take any thing for what her HB left. Then I saw Pamela passing by, I greeted her and she said that am now stayin g in my HB’s village, he is the one who decided because he cannot manage to build a house, he don’t have money but we will be back next year, then I said all the best.

Then I started cooking nsima with beans I was very tired and at 7pm I went to sleep.

14 August 2009

In the morning when I woke up I went to fetch some water at the borehole with Sofia then on the way I saw the old woman (mother of chief Mudzi B) clearing her field. Then at the borehole I found Kondwani, Hilda, Amila, Florence and Fissa. Then Kondwani said that sorry I didn’t come to greet you because am busy I went to sell my cotton with Hilda at Ch. village, the Great - Rex company said they will come there but they didn’t, then we just left some boys at night to wait but still they didn’t come and the Great - Rex co. sent a message that they are very busy buying at other places and they will come later.
Kondwani continued that she want to buy maize after selling cotton because she don’t have enough food to eat and Amila told me that she is still doing the business of selling sugarcane buying 400mk selling 800mk and as of now she already bought a bag of maize 2000mk to vendors through the same BS and as of now she already kept 2000mk that she sold sugarcane and she want to buy another bag of maize.

Amila told me that she is still doing the business of selling sugarcane buying 400mk selling 800mk and as of now she already bought a bag of maize 2000mk to vendors through the same BS and as of now she already kept 2000mk that she sold sugarcane and she want to buy another bag of maize.

Elube sent her 2 sons to go and sell 2 bales of cotton at Ch. village, said Hilda. But the buyers didn’t come, wife of Mr Ntawanga was talking to Dorica that, my son wanted to marry you but you refused and now he has found another wife at Ch. village then Dorica answered that I want to continue school. Then Hilda said that aunt G I have 1 ½ bales of cotton and Ada has 1 bale, after selling cotton I want to buy maize because I don’t have enough food but your friend (her dotta) Ada is married we just saw the owner of the child coming with his clothes and he bought 9 dresses for the daughter, when I greeted him he said that I want to help Ada taking care of the child, I have now divorced with my second wife because she is rude, then Ada accepted and now I told them to start cooking their own food because at the beginning we were eating together and it caused her HB to be lazy.

I harvested 1 bag of nandolo said Hilda and I sold 1 basin at 250mk because I didn’t have soap and I wanted to buy matemba another basin of nandolo I exchanged with a cooking pot because I don’t have enough kitchen tools and I kept ½ bag (25 kgs) for food. When we harvested our nandolo, a lot of men were coming in our village to exchange pots, plastic basin, with nandolo almost 6 men per day and everybody in the village exchanged.

When I reached home I sent Kingsley to buy potatoes for breakfast (50mk) then I washed my body, after that I went to the Musifata compound to see if the buyers will indeed come, then Saibi said that I have 2 bales of cotton and after selling I want to buy clothes and grasses for my house and I will also continue the BS of selling masamba or cassava. And I asked if she is planning to grow cotton this year and she answered that yes I will do because if I will not grow cotton then I will not have money to buy soap, salt or clothes. Then I saw her mother collecting firewood to burn her bricks, mother of Florence greeted me and said that I want to burn my bricks now because after selling cotton I want to buy iron sheets.

Then HB of Magda came to greet me (the one with nice clothes) and he said that I am happy because I have 7 bales of cotton and with the money I will see what to do but I have not yet planned. Then I saw HB of Filimona hiring his bike to and from Balaka. The buyers didn’t come up to 1 pm then Mr Ntawanga called them and said that sorry we are busy we will come on Sunday. Then I went back home, when I reached home I cooked nsima with beans and ate with Sofia and her children.

Then I called Livia and I asked her why she is not telling me the truth about her marriage.
Then Livia laughed and said that my mother is the one who told me to accept, she said that she cannot manage to buy soap for me. I asked her why didn’t she wait to see his behaviour and she said that HB of Elube told me that he has a good behaviour but as soon as we came together, one day he told me that: Livia you are not giving me warm water to wash my body, and he was just borrowing some money to buy matemba, soap and lotion because he was just staying without doing anything. Livia continued that I encouraged him to go to the chief and pay the money and he said that I don’t have and he asked me to go and borrow money to my father 700mk and my father gave me. Then we went together to pay, I asked her if she went for blood testing with him and she said no I didn’t because I trusted him. Then I told her that I am going to [clinic] village this afternoon then let us go together for you to be tested and she said no! am afraid because I married to the man whom I don’t know.

Then I started my journey to [clinic] village, on the way I met with chief Mudzi B and she told me that tomorrow at 11 am we will go and sell our cotton at Ch. village, buyers from Great - Rex company will come there, then I said no problem I will go with you. Then I continued my journey, on the way HB of Esnart called me and he said that I am with my wife in SA and you can talk to her, then Esnart told me that I reached in SA on 8th August but I have not yet started working and I left my children with my mother, but SA is nice because we are eating 3 times aday and nice food. Then she promised to call me when she will start working. (selling in shop, cooking) happy now, in vlg too muvh gossiping

When I reached to [clinic] village, I explained to them what I was looking for [HIV test stats] from December to July 2009.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Month</th>
<th>Male</th>
<th>Women</th>
<th>Male +</th>
<th>Women+</th>
</tr>
</thead>
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<td>26</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jan</td>
<td>35</td>
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<td>-</td>
<td>3</td>
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<tr>
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<td>20</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>-</td>
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<tr>
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<td>34</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Apr</td>
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<td>18</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>3</td>
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<tr>
<td>Jun</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
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</table>
Then he explained to me that there was a column written “Ever HIV Tested” and he said that he was writing separately but both men and women who it was their first time to be tested but from Jan to May “Ever HIV Tested”

<table>
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<th>Mar</th>
<th>Apr</th>
<th>May</th>
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<td>15</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>35</td>
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And the other column was written “with partner”

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<th>Mar</th>
<th>Apr</th>
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<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>8</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Then I thanked them for their help, when I reached home, I found Kondwani and Sofia chatting and they were saying that Jeneti harvested a lot of nandolo and she bought iron sheets,
and after selling cotton she will also buy more iron sheets. Kondwani continued that tomorrow we are going to sell out cotton at Ch. village and after selling I want to buy 2 bags of maize and I told her to tell me when they will be going to sell and she accepted, at 7:30 I slept.

15 August 2009

In the morning when I woke up I started sweeping after that I cooked potatoes and ate with Sofia and her children. After breakfast I washed my body, then at 10 am Kondwani sent a message to her child that we should go to Ch. village. They carried their cotton on their heads to Ch. village village. Then on the way Kondwani started telling me that HB of Haliday came but everyday he is just drinking beer from morning to evening and his wife was complaining that he used to knock at the door around 10pm and as of now he impregnated a certain girl from M. village village. Kondwani continued that instead of chatting with his wife, after missing for along period of time he is spending much time at beer. And one day he went with HB of Vanessa and they came back at 10:30 pm and Vanessa was angry and told her HB not to go there again and indeed he stopped. Still on the way Kondwani said that Hilda went with her HB to put their cotton at Ch. village waiting for the buyers, but her HB told her not to go with him but Hilda said that we were together in the field growing cotton and now we will go together and sell. And now her HB sent her to receive money. Then on the way we met with HB of Amila and he greeted me and said that I already kept my cotton there at Ch. village and am now going to receive money, but after selling I will give the money to my wife but I will beg her some money for beer (we all laughed) she just received a receipt yesterday. HB of Amila continued that did you hear aunt G that your friend Livia got married to a certain man but after 2 weeks the marriage ended, then I answered that I don’t know, he continued that Livia likes money because the man showed her a lot of money from his pocket but he told Livia that before using this money you must go and sleep with your boyfriend and bring his underwear here, I want to do something. [J: ??? G: maybe doing BS somewhere and went to trad doctor for prosperity who told him to do this] (to do better in his business) (that’s just a traditional belief where he thought that the underwear could be used when making a charm for running his business)

Kondwani answered that instead of telling her mother what HB asked her to do, she went to sleep with Levision (HB of Thokozani) and brought the underwear. Then in the morning we just saw Livia and her HB on the bike going to Balaka, she said that they were going for shopping. Then when they reached at Balaka the HB told Livia to wait for him at the Bank, Livia waited up to 3pm but the HB didn’t come back. Livia came back home while crying some women gathered and asked what was wrong and Livia explained what happened everybody laughed and said do you remember when your ex-HB he asked you to kill a child you refused then runned away. But now when your HB asked you to sleep with your boyfriend you just accepted without telling anyone.

Vanessa joined us ans laughed and continued that everybody was amazed with what happened to Livia. Then I told them that she didn’t tell me anything, then HB of Amila said that she can’t tell you because she is ashamed. When we reached there we found that a lot of people
are waiting for buyers then I asked Kondwani and Vanessa what was going on and they explained to me that some people brought their cotton yesterday, the buyers came and took all the cotton and gave everybody a receipt and they promised to come to day to give us some money, chief Mudzi B, HB of Fatima joined us as they told me the same thing that the buyers came and took all the cotton and gave a receipt to everybody and they were told to come and collect their money the following day.

We waited from 10 am and the buyers came at 5:45 pm. They started calling everybody and payed them [J: publicly? G: No, I sat near to buyers], I waited to see how much everybody got, but some women from Mudzi B sent their children [J: why would that be? G: Busy with preparing initiation ceremony] to receive for them, and we went back home at 8:20 pm.

HB of Fatima 211 kgs which is 8.862mk.

HB of Elube sent his son to receive the money for him 446 kgs which is 18.732mk.

Dora sent her son and it was 150kgs which is 6.300mk.

The old woman from Mudzi B (Ayama) sent her grandchild, I didn’t hear the kgs properly but he received 8.720mk.

Fissa sent her son I didn’t hear the kgs but he received 13.400mk.

Kondwani it was 83 kgs and she received 3.486mk.

Chief Mudzi B went with her son and it was 185kgs which is 7.770mk.

Hilda 23kgs which is 966mk.

Vanessa 302kgs which is 12.684mk.

Amila 58kgs which is 2.436mk.

On the way back everybody was happy and said that they will not stop growing cotton because if they will stop growing that means they will not be able to buy clothes, soap, ndiwo. And they also got used that at this month we are able to find money and we find money once a year.

Chief Mudzi B explained that on Monday I will go to Balaka to buy clothes and food with my
son although I don’t have enough food but I will buy clothes. Son of Dora answered that we will share this money with Dorica my mother and myself and everybody will buy what he/she wants.

Kondwani said that I will just buy food because I don’t have enough. Son of Fissa said that my mother has got enough food and enough clothes then I don’t know what she will buy. Son of Elube said that I don’t know what are the plans of my parents, but they will give me some money because we were working together in the field. Hilda said that I will buy food and clothes on Monday at Balaka.

When I reached home I found Sofia already slept (I ate nsima with matemba) and slept.

16 August 2009

When I wake up I started sweeping then after that I went to greet Jasmine and she said that buyers from [large commercial estate] will come on Tuesday and buy our cotton and with the money I will buy food. After that I went to fetch some water then I met with Venesi, I asked her if she already sold her cotton and she said that I am still waiting for the price to be high, at [small crossroads market] buyers will come and buy at 65mk, some people laughed and said that we will see if it is true but at [large commercial estate] they will stop buying at 18th August. When I reached at the borehole I found chief Mudzi B explaining to her friend that Vanessa don’t forget to give 450mk to group Mudzi B, I asked them what for and they answered that when you just left here, GVH slaughtered a big cow and everybody in the village went there to take 1kg and promised to pay after selling cotton and it was 450mk per kg.

Still at the borehole I met with Amila and I asked her if her HB gave her the money after selling cotton and she said yes and I gave him 1000mk to buy what he want. Then Saibi was explaining to Hamra that she has now started a BS of selling boiled green maize, buying at Liwawadzi and selling at [tiny crossroads market] grocery.

When I reached home I found Kondwani and Innocent including Jasmine chatting. I joined them and I asked if buyers have come at Mudzi A and they said no but they promised to come on Monday. Then Jasmine said that I am looking for someone to do ganyu in my field (clearing the land) then Kondwani said that am ready to do it with Hilda, how much is it? And Jasmine answered that you must see the field first and we will discuss there. Sofia was not there then Innocent said that my in-law from M. village wants to come and chat today, my brother who died was in relationship with her and she is 3 months pregnant, the other one who is at Balaka is also 2 months pregnant, but the first wife have got 2 children while Sofia has 4 children then Jasmine said that my son was just getting married everywhere without being afraid of matenda. Sofia joined us and everybody stopped talking.
At lunch we ate nsima and nandolo, then I went to [small crossroads market] to see if some one was buying but not all the other fence at [small crossroads market] was burned because farmers were angry that buyers are not coming to buy. On the way back I saw Teleza sitting on the veranda with the same man whom I saw on market day. I just greeted them and continued my journey home.

At home Amila came to buy paraffin and she came with Kondwani I asked again Amila if her HB gave her the whole money and she said no but he just gave me 2000mk and he took 486mk for fodya and beer, and she continued that as of now I have already finished eating what I harvested and I am eating what I am buying through BS of selling sugarcane. Kondwani answered that I’m remaining with 1 bag of maize and I have now started selling tomatoes from dimba, am just selling at home.

Then Nola passed by and she called Kondwani separately and said that I am looking for someone to help me clearing the field (ganyu) hen Kondwani accepted and said that I will come with Hilda. Later on we saw Vanessa passing by with a chicken, Amila greeted her and said that you have bought a chicken, then Vanessa answered that yes because I am happy I didn’t expect that I can sell my cotton everybody laughed.

Then we cooked nsima with nandolo and ate with Sofia and her children at 7:30pm we slept.

17th August 2009

In the morning when I woke up, I went to fetch some water and I left Sofia cooking, at the bolehole I met with Saibi. I greeted her and asked if the buyers will indeed come, and she said “Mr Ntawanga went to find out, then he was told that the have failed to come because they have gone to attend the meeting at Balaka, because Bingu is complaining that the price is low. And we have now decided to go and sell at [large commercial estate] because most of the villages has finished selling their cotton, and we are afraid that may be they want to close (said Saibi) when I reached home I started packing my things. Then I gave 5000MK separately as you told me. Then 2000MK to Jasmine separately. Everybody said thanks a lot to you for the help. Then I started my journey back to Lilongwe but on the way I passed by the house of Chikondi asking if the buyers will come and she said no! But we have sent a message at [large commercial estate] for them to come and buy then they will come tomorrow. After that I said good bye to everybody. Then I saw a man passing by exchanging pots with nandolo, then chief Mudzi B said that I already exchanged 4pots and its enough. She was going to the Musitafa compound just to chat.

Janneke: GVH was visiting in Mzuzu but had to come back early because they only ate nsima made of
cassava, felt very hungry in stomach.
This document contains field notes of the anthropological study that led to Janneke Verheijen’s PhD dissertation *Balancing men, morals and money: Women’s agency between HIV and security in a Malawi village* (2013). In this dissertation many references are made to the field notes through codes. These codes refer to the specific document (P2, P3 or P8) and the specific paragraph within these documents. P2 contains the field notes of research assistant Gertrude Finyiza. P3 and P8 contain the field notes of Janneke Verheijen.

As described in the dissertation, the field notes were initially handwritten by Verheijen and Finyiza, and later typed out by a Malawian woman hired for this job. The typed out notes were then entered into a computer programme for qualitative data analysis (Atlas.ti). The paragraphs of the field notes were numbered by this software (explaining the sometimes strange numbering).

All documents contain the raw material – no editing of the field notes has been done accept for a replacement of all names (of both persons and places) by pseudonyms, acronyms, or XXX. Most person pseudonyms consist merely of first names, even though in reality women are generally addressed as “(grand)mother of” followed by one of their (grand)children’s names, or by the name of their father or then-husband. By which name they are addressed or talked about can vary per occasion. For readability, all these varying references were replaced by a fixed pseudonym for each woman.

**Clarification P3:**
P3 contains the bulk of Verheijen’s field notes. Most of the notes were handwritten in notebooks, and later typed into a computer by a Malawian assistant – causing some strange typos and punctuations. Most of the notes in this document are in English. However, the notes about the initial search for a research site are in Dutch. If you would like a translation of these notes, please contact the author at jpeverheijen@gmail.com. As time progresses, more ChiChewa words and sentences appear in these field notes. In some cases the words are followed by an English translation, in other cases the translation can be looked up in the Glossary. Most full sentences and paragraphs in ChiChewa are followed by an English translation.
Glossary of frequently used ChiChewa word:

Chibwenzi = Boyfriend/girlfriend
Chitenje = Multifunctional piece of cloth that women wear over their skirts, carry their babies in on their backs, sleep on and/or under at night.
CUMO = Microfinance institute in Malawi, established by Concern Universal
Dotta = Gertrude's English spelling of ‘daughter’
Ganyu = Piece work
Kachasu = Locally brewed gin
Kanyenya = Dried fish fried in maize flour Mandasi = snack (fried flour cake)
MASAF = Malawi Social Action Fund
Masamba = Green leafs for relish
Matemba = Dried fish
Ndiwo = Relish
Ngaiwa = Flour made of maize husks
Nkhokwe = Maize granary
Nsima = Thick maize porridge (the staple food)
Thobwa = Maize flour drink/gruel
Ufa = Maize flour
Ufa woyera = White maize flour
Usipa = Small dried fish
Zibwenzi = Boyfriends/girlfriends
Zigumu = Maize flour cakes
Zitenje = Plural of chitenje
Zitumbuwa = Maize flour cakes with banana

Glossary of frequently used acronyms:

BS = business
DIL = daughter-in-law
GVH = group village head (the head of a group of villages which all have their own village head)
HH = household
MIL = mother-in-law
MK = Malawi Kwacha (national currency, at time of the research 100MK = 0.5 Euro)
SA = South Africa
VH = village head/chief
Fieldnotes Janneke

From other notebook:
46 married women: 21 have land while husband not, 17 own land both/together, 6 don't have but husband does, 2 both don't own but rent.

Men dependent on their wives? Or is it easy for them to find another wife & land? Both Balakasi and Jeneti related how their husbands stole from their maize to give to/seduce another woman to whom they later moved. If the man has helped (through own labor or payment of ganyu) to cultivate the land, the harvest will usually be shared in case of divorce between cultivation and harvest. When owning separate lands, wife still feeds husband from hers (eg Hamra). When husband has several wives, working separately, but husband may help on wives'.

30 Okt 2009, Amsterdam
Had tea with Magi from Malawi (PhD Uni Twente) who did field work in 2 villages in South Africa: people only cultivating very small plots because will receive food hand outs from gov or NGOs; one counselor had arranged for 2 tractors to be donated, but few people took the effort to use them so were eventually simply confisquated by two wealthy HHs; one HIV+ young woman got strong again after taking ART and asked Magi’s research assistant about job opportunities, she answered “why look for a job, you can get government support?”; many others had same attitude; if water is not a need, but a car drives up with a water emblem, you say water IS your need; supervisor finds Magi too harsh about lazy attitude of villagers; in SA free electricity (50kW) “because it brings development” eg light for studying etc - nobody studying, only watching television!; she didn’t want to work for commercial company, but here in uni most important thing is money as well, all the time have to be looking for money, money, money; had she opted for research in HIV/AIDS would have been plenty of funds available, but not for energy [in 2005]; Great-grandfather worked and traveled with missionaries, considered education of crucial importance for development, hence sent also his daughters to school, so Magi’s grandmother has been to college...; she and her sister sent over 1000 Euro back home to Malawi, part of which was to be used for renovating a church once built by their grandmother in Magi’s home village, but by accident all it was used and since then no one else contributed, only asked them for everything...

Okt 2009, Amsterdam
Lwanda 2004, 29: Nyamakazi = rheumatism

Anecdote Jones [our nightwatch when I lived in Lilongwe]: did not want a bicycle with logo of [my husband’s company] because then “everybody at Mtandire would see/think that he is employed”.

If Malawians used to belief that the only way to assure themselves of a good harvest was by pleasing their ancestor spirits, by offering specially brewed beer etc - did they select the best grains for these offers? Did this affect the quality of the seeds kept for replanting? Degeneration of seed quality?

Visit to Balaka district coordinators, May 22 2008
HIV & AIDS:
District AIDS Coordinator (DAC) Balaka, Mr Davis Konondo: 08-504201 (afwezig)

HIV coordinator Balaka District Hospital Ms Kasiya Nthanje (08376960/09347777)

Spoken with Mr Clifton Chyangachyanga - Director of Planning and Development Balaka

- Balaka district population 314.000 (Balaka district as whole considered rural, since towns are very small. Balaka boma has radius of 4,5 km
- HIV prevalence 18,2%

Bureaucratic/Administrative system

- District level: District AIDS Coordinating Committee (DACC), divided into sub-committees (on Youth, Behavior change, Home based care and Orphans - the 4 pillars of the National AIDS Commission NAC)
- Traditional Authority level: Community AIDS Committees (on voluntary basis, participating for own benefit), linked/affiliated to Area Development Committee, also divided into sub-committees
- Group village level: Village AIDS committee (1 per group village headman), existing of support providers & infected and subdivided into CBOs, linked to Village Development Committee

HIV/AIDS interventions Balaka

Holistic approach to fight AIDS pandemic: Food security for infected and affected HHs (both food handouts and farm inputs); Nutrition education & supplementation for infected; Economic empowerment for vulnerable groups (both infected/affected & young women, bicycle transporters, phone boots operators etc); Home based care groups (nutritional education, community care, referral); VCT + ART (hospital).

Generally, especially infected and affected HHs targeted.

Organization involved in HIV/AIDS interventions Balaka (zag van veel kantoorje langs hoofdweg)

MASAF: targets infected and affected HHs with income generating activities

UNECO: Training peer educators & supply them with soft loans

Go Malawi: ART, HBC

Self Help Development International: Livelihood programs with HIV/AIDS aspect “AIDS management”

Ray of Hope: Livelihood program, cash & food handouts to infected

World Vision: Livelihood program with HIV/AIDS management component
Concern Universal: Livelihood program with HIV/AIDS management component

Mwaphunziro (?): Peer education & skills training for youth and CSWs

CADECOM: Nutrition for infected

Emmanuel International: Food handouts for vulnerable HHs

Evangelical Lutheran Development Services

**Agriculture:**

Spoken with Crops Officer Ms Mattiya (08-670743) at Balaka (DADO and others will move from Liwonde to Balaka as per June 1 - since Balaka has only been autonomous for TEN years now...)

DADO Mr Luwanda: 05-428828 email: cosluwanda@yahoo.com <mailto:cosluwanda@yahoo.com>

Assistant DADO Mr Baluwa: 08874076 (rexbaluwa@yahoo.ca <mailto:rexbaluwa@yahoo.ca> - Mr Luwanda ook op te bereiken)

Head of Crops Mr Dup: 08163187

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*FF=farm family

*% of FFs without food in Feb 2008

Phalula & Utale worst hit by drought last season

ICRISAT in Mpilesi: Chimseu Village (GVH), Nailuwa, Ojesi (beide onder GVH Chimseu) - app in centre of Mpilesi - with Chinyangwa triangle project = improved groundnut (& finger millet?) varieties & seed banks

**Organizations working in field of agriculture/food security**

FIDP (all EPAs): Diversification, livestock, conservation agri, horticulture, nutrition, HIV/AIDS (provide farm inputs and training trough clubs)

Concern Universal (Rivirivi): Diversification, livestock, same as FIDP

World Vision (Utale): Just getting started
LISEP (Phalula & Utale): Christians, legumes multiplication, livestock

CADECOM

FAO (Phalula, Utale, Mpilise): “Enhancing food security & developing sustainable rural livelihood project”

SARRNET: cassava

Evangelical Lutheran Development Services

Sight Savers

CIMMYT

May 29, 2008: Second visit to Balaka.

Mission: Select EPA [extension planning area], section, village, house...

Found Ms Mattiya, DADO and all AEDCs meeting at Chitsime Motel of the Catholic Women Organisation (of Balaka, Machinga and Mangochi - gebouwd door kerk ter inkomsten generatie voor vrouwenactiviteiten, cursussen ed, e.g. ‘home craft’, naaien etc) - they gathered here to assemble the crop production statistics of all EPAs of last harvest). Due to drought spell the whole month of Feb this year, lower yields than previous years, answered AEDO Mr Kayenda of Utale EPA when I asked him.

Met DADO Mr Luwanda, nice young man who seemed to understand what I wanted, suggesting the following locations:

- Between Utale en Mpilisi (selected by me based on statistics of Ms Mattiya concerning food insecurity in combination with data from Malawi Atlas of Social Statistics - highest food insec along Shire River etc, Utale highest percentage of farmer HHs without food, but in Mpilisi ICRISAT project: Chinyangwa Triangle in Chimseu village, Ojesi village and Nailuwa village - all three under GVH Chimseu) food insec is serieus in all villages along the river, hence both in Utale en Mpilisi, ecologie, environment, rainfall patterns etc, the same everywhere (even mobile network). Mpilisi better, because Utale difficult to reach in rainy season.

- XXX has no AEDO [governmental agricultural extension staff], vacancy. But the AEDC [stuurt ons wel naar AEDO van section Mpilisi, Mr Kambo omdat dat een erg actieve man is. Er is nog wel een andere optie, “but he is weak,” zegt Ms Chikwathu met afkeurend gezicht. AEDO Kambo can come on motorbike tomorrow and provide us with data about number of HHs and FHH per village. Zij zou dan zelf vandaag de die data verzamelen en aan hem geven,
maar toen ik haar net (6 PM) hierover probeerde te bellen, geen contact. Kregen wel AEDO Mr Kambo aan de lijn, maar had niks van AEDC gehoord omdat zijn telefoon hele dag ergens aan de charger had gelegen... Hebben nu doorgegeven welke info we zoeken, hij zegt het te gaan verzamelen, we meeten hem morgen om 7 AM bij de spoorwegovergang op de dirt road richting Utale 2 Health Center.

0085

- Gingen in (lege) middag maar naar dat health center in Utale, een mission hospital, hopend daar wel gesegregeerde data te vinden over FEMALE vs MALE HIV PREVALENCE IN CATCHMENT AREA & INCREASE OR DECREASE?? Troffen erg vriendelijke Clinical Officer Mr Alexander Nyambe (08642367), maar helaas bleek al HIV personeel naar een paar daagse workshop over HIV, AIDS and nutrition... Tel had hij ook niet, maar ik bel Mr Nyambe op maandag om nummer van Mr Magombo van het VCT center te achterhalen ☎️: 09381191...[13 June, finally got info on HIV test results at Utale 2 Health Center: between Jan and May 2008 245 people tested of which 51 HIV positive: 18 males and 33 females. Says that numbers are increasing, especially among women]. Er was tot 2 jaar geleden een HIV/AIDS project van ADRA hier dat 5 jaar liep, maar nu phased out - wellicht hebben zij de cijfers die ik zoek, suggested Mr Nyambe. Contact Mr Usi, ADRA Blantyre.

0086

- AEDC Ms Chikwathu zegt vol trots dat ik “to her home” ga - het gebied waar zij oorspronkelijk vandaan komt. Een ouder, leuke doch ietwat eervolle/pronkende/vrouw. Zoals veel meer al lang gepensioneerd (verplicht bij overheid als je 55 bent, maar gaan daarna blijkbaar nog massaal aan de slag. Zo ook e.g. Mr Samu Phiri met wie ik vandaag op pad ben, werkte 16 bij de overheid, voor laag loon en toen met pensioen). Zij gaat persoonlijk voor me regelen dat ik een goed huisje krijg. Heb op het hart gedrukt dat het vooral niet te fancy moet zijn, ben benieuwd. Ook gaat ze een servant voor me zoeken, hmm, zei ze, mischien wel m'n jongste zusje, of anders een nichtje. Volgens Samu zal zo'n vrouw heel blij zijn met een maandsalaris van 5000 MK. Is alleenstaand, woont alleen met worker in huis. Oudste dochter werkt in Balaka bij de Standard Bank, die daarna bij Escom als technician, en noemde zo alles op. Heeft ook 1 kleindochter die in 1993 geboren is. Samu Phiri: na overheid andere instituten en nu dus bij ICRISAT terwijl zijn vrouw nog onder Blantyre woont, rearing pigs (houdt ze van, hebben eerst cattle geprobeerd, maar die hebben veel zorg nodig, moeten de hele dag grazen, en hun shepard was een dronkaard, kwam sommige dagen gewoon niet opdagen enz. Pigs geven veel minder problemen, gewoon af en toe was mais bran voor kopen). Geboren in Zomba district, ouders hadden echter maar klein stukje land en besloten naar Machinga district te verhuizen - naar Mplisi! Maar veel problemen met water tekorten, erratic rainfall, drought. En na 3 jaar van land gekickt om de nearby Shire Range van Dr Banda moest uitbreiden. Iedereen moest simpelweg verhuizen en kreeg daar een hele kleine compensatie voor. Niemand protesteerde, want “indertijd was al het land in Malawi van Dr Banda...” Verhuisden toen naar betere, vruchtbare plek in Machinga, dus achteraf alleen maar goed geweest.

0087

- Vertelt: iii, als mensen in de jaren 70 hadden gezien hoe [geciviliseerd] het er hier nu uit ziet, hadden ze het niet geloofd! Dat er zoveel huisjes zouden staan, een goede [onverharde] weg zou zijn... Toen was hier alleen maar bush, uninhabited. Too hot and too dry. Pas door
population pressure (zoals dus blijkbaar zijn eigen ouders) hierheen verhuisd, sort of
gedwongen dus, door omstandigheden.

0089
- We rijden verschillende malen langs trucks vol katoen en 1 keer langs een office van Great
Lakes waar katoen in grote juten zakken wordt gepropt. Later komen we langs diverse
dronken mannen. Aphiri merkt op dat deze mannen allemaal net geld hebben geïnd met de
verkoop van hun katoen oogst (nr 1 cash crop in Balaka), en dat nu in grote getalen
spenden aan drank (liegst kachasu omdat je daar het snelst dronken van wordt, en rest
houses - “verblijven ze soms 3, 4 weken!” - vrouwen. Hm, suggest ik, dus wellicht dat de HIV
infecties omhoog schieten na tabaks- en katoenverkopen... Jaaaaa, bevestigt Aphiri.

0090
- De (vrouwelijke) beer brewers verdienen daar dan natuurlijk wel lekker aan. Slapen die ook
wel eens met hun klanten? Mwah, sommige. Maar voor diegene is het daarna wel moeilijk
om nog te trouwen (op toon dat dat gewoon is waar uiteindelijk iedereen naar streeft). De
nette brewers/verkoopsters geven duidelijk aan wat haar verkooptijden zijn, en stuurt bij
sluitingstijd mannen weg met de woorden “als je meer wilt drinken kom je morgen maar
terug.” Een vriendin van hem brouwt bier en heeft op een gegeven moment haar man het
huis uit gezet omdat hij toch niet bijdroeg aan the HH income. Ze verdient genoeg om haar
kids naar school te vieren. Is dan in dag uit bezig met brouwen.

May 30, 2008

0093
- Sluitingstijd van beer brewing women die huwelijk willen redden, respect tonen aan husband
dmv zo’n sluitingstijd: ong 10 PM. Sommige andere blijven mannen dronkener en dronkener
voeren tot ze niet meer naar huis kunnen komen en ter plekke in slaap vallen. Vrouw
besteekt hem dan, legt eventueel nog meer lege flessen om hem heen zodat wanneer hij zn
roes uitgeslapen heeft en merkt dat al zn geld weg is, ze kan zeggen dat hij zo veel heeft
gedronken, zelfs als zn vrienden trakte er op. Vrouwen die getrouwd zijn met zulke mannen,
met beer drinking habits, blijven meestal wel bij hem: “is my husband...” Eerder de kids, mn
zonen die hem op zn gedrag aanspreken.

0094
- AEDO Mr Kambo ontmoet, die dus eigenlijk AEDO van EPA Mpilisi is, maar wel even de data
de ziek AEDO van Khwalala wilde halen voor ons. Khwalala heeft 13 dorpen (tenminste,
er zijn 13 lijsten met aantal HHs, maar de AEDO zegt dat dorpen zich soms opsplitsen enz,
ofwel niet statisch):

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name village</th>
<th>Aantal HHs</th>
<th>Aantal FHHs</th>
<th>% FHHs of all HHs</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Magombo</td>
<td>119</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mereka</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nkugula</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Mpepho geselecteerd op basis van onder gemiddelde grootte (= 94; 6 dorpen kleiner & 6 dorpen groter)/niet te groot, en relatief groot aantal FHHs (66%; gemiddelde is 41%). Valt onder GVH Wiliki. AEDC Ms Chikwathu kent de VH goed, zegt ze, “is vriend van me, we hebben samen gedanst op feesten.” Zij en AEDO Mr Kambo gaan nu GVH en VH inlichten over mijn plannen. Ik heb gevraagd of ze hem kunnen vragen “to allow me to stay within his community without any direct benefit to them,” benadrukt dat het hier niet om een development project gaat, geen interventie, slechts onderzoek - dat als weliswaar als purpose heeft om uiteindelijk interventies te verbeteren, maar zal niet direct leiden naar project/interventie... Kom maandag 23 juni tot 24 juni weer om zelf met VH te spreken, mezelf bij villagers te introduceren en huis te selecteren uit voorselectie van AEDC. Dan ook bed en kast regelen, opdracht geven die te laten maken. + WAAROM ZOVEEL FHHs IN MPEPHO???

Juist veel katholieken in Balaka ivm met oude missiepost: Utale Mission bestaat 15 aug 100 jaar, waren in feite de eerste settlers in omgeving. Balaka boma is echt pas heel recentelijk aan het groeien, boomen, sinds het opeens hoofdstad van een district is geworden, opeens kantoren van DADO etc, NGOs... Vroeger was het genant om te zeggen dat je naar secondary school was geweest in Balaka, nu niet meer (Harvey Charlie and Harry Msere gingen hier naar school).

Village Development Committees bestaan al - het systeem bestaat al - sinds het hele agri extension systeem is ingesteld, Banda’s period. Maar werken helemaal niet, zegt Aphiri. Pas als er een interventie oid komt, wordt er snel een committee verzameld. Worden in principe allemaal gekozen door de dorpelingen, VH is wel lid, maar vnl formeel, is niet de voorzitter. Altijd erg top-down systeem geweest: alle initiatieven komen van boven, van de District Development Coordinator (die wsl weer orders krijgt van de overheid). Hoewel dat recentelijk wel wat aan het veranderen is, officieel, met meer Participatory Rural Appraisals enz.

Vroeger was agr extension ‘general’, de AEDOs kwamen over vanalles info geven dat de boeren eventueel kon helpen, boeren konden daar dan vervolgens uit kiezen. Ging ook mn een-op-een, AEDO ging alle HHs af. Maar sinds de bevolking opeens enorm gegroeid is (in 70s nog maar 4 miljoen mensen in Malawi, nu 12 miljoen), werd dat onmogelijk. Nu extension on
demand, ofwel boeren moeten zelf naar AEDO komen wanneer ze over iets info willen hebben. Verder gebeurt de extension alleen nog maar massaal: AEDO laat VH weten dat hij zn mensen dan en dan moet verzamelen, en dan komt de AEDO hen inlichten over iets.

August 4, 2008 2 PM, Calling Mr Juwawo, AEDC of Phalula: 08617504

- Selecting village for field research
- Which villages were targeted in Phalula EPA by the ICRISAT NDF groundnut project?
- Impression impact of project: increased livelihood security?

ICRISAT groundnut clubs now active in 25 villages, according to Mr Juwawo. Every year/season new ones are created.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Village</th>
<th>Start project</th>
<th>Nr of HHs</th>
<th>MHH</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>FHH</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Chisoka</td>
<td>Govati 55</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>114</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Kumuwawa 33</td>
<td>1 / 2005/6</td>
<td>93</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Chaima</td>
<td></td>
<td>55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Chingodzi</td>
<td></td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Mthengomwach</td>
<td>Chikondi</td>
<td>1 / 2005/6</td>
<td>180</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Kavala</td>
<td>2005/6</td>
<td>89</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Chiwengana (Kuthambo section)</td>
<td>100</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Mthengomwacha 23</td>
<td></td>
<td>2005/6</td>
<td>43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kangankundi</td>
<td>Mankhwala 34</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Joe Linzi</td>
<td></td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Mponani</td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Tsambe</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Damiano</td>
<td></td>
<td>84</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Plattegrond Phalula district: beetje afgelegen dorp in section met hoge food insecurity

- Which sections most food insecure? (Kuthambo & Phalula)
- Celtel network (ja)
- Impact ICRISAT project on livelihood security
- Exactly which villages did project start & when?
- Necessary that translator speaks Yao too?

In dorp: huisje selecteren bij wc en wasplek; niet te afgelegen, liefst bij FHH

Dinsdag August 12, Mlambe Motel, Balaka

Op 12 augustus naar AEDC Mr Jackson Juwawo gegaan van Phalula EPA, langs de weg naar Blantyre,
30 km naar Splitting met weg naar Balaka boma. Met hem tijd gebakkeleid over mogelijk onderzoeksdorp. Criteria: ICRISAT groundnut project for at least some years; small number of HHs but relatively high percentage of FHHs; Celtel network; not too close to road (to represent more or less average Malawian village - AEDC bevestigt dat dorpen die dicht bij grote weg (M1) liggen bijna al hun inkomsten halen uit verkoop van charcoal langs weg, indeed anders zijn, minder food insecure. Moeilijke zoektocht, want de dorpen waar ICRISAT in 2003/4 begonnen is met project (Kumkwawa in Chisoka section, Mtengomwacha in Mthengomwacha section en Nd?? in Ku?? Section) allemaal juist dicht langs de weg liggen (makkelijk bereikbaar, AEDC bevestigt ook dat inderdaad meeste ontwikkelingsprojecten in dorpen zijn die makkelijk te bereiken zijn). Vanuit die dorpen verspreidt het project elk jaar een beetje verder van de weg af, dan worden in nieuwe dorpen seed multiplication clubs georganiseerd, krijgen zaden van eerdere clubs. Zowiezo lijken alle dorpen in Phalula EPA dichtbij weg te liggen, ligt aan beide kanten van de M1. Hmm... Erg food insecure inderdaad, zegt AEDC, zijn EPA is er het ergste aan toe in Balaka. Afgelopen seizoen long dry spell gehad, kleine oogsten, nu al zijn er gezinnen zonder mais. Toen we eenmaal 2 dorpen hadden geselecteerd (Msekeni section omdat het verder van weg af ligt, Sanudi en Chikamera villages, waar ICRISAT project nu 2 jaar loopt/ICRISAT groundnuts nu 2 jaar worden gecultiveerd. Sanudi ?? HHs, waarvan ?? FHH; Chikamera 16 MHH, 46 FHH - wat extreem veel FHH in vergelijking met aantal MHH is (Waarom? Vroeg ik AEDC: “Tja..., cultuur, veel ongetrouwde vrouwen, mannen trekken naar stad om werk te zoeken... Vroeg t ook aan AEDO van Nyanyala section (die ook Msekeni onder hoede heeft, due to shortage of AEDOs - 4 in Phalula EPA met 7 sections): wist niet goed antwoord, zei dat t ook een kwestie van definitie is, dat in sommoge HHs wel ook een man woont, maar als AEDO vraagt who the head of HH is, antwoordt vrouw dat zij dat is, omdat zij beslissingen neemt enz). Eenmaal daar bleken huisjes erg verspreid te liggen, geen dorpskern te bekennen... Niet handig, me dunkt (omdat: moeilijk voor mij overal langs te gaan, maar wsl ook onderling weinig contact, terwijl ik overspel en roddels nodig heb...). Eenmaal in Sanudi (overigens vnl ChiChewa, Yao’s zijn echt uitzondering in Phalula) 2 kapotte banden toen we langs dorpspomp (of eigenlijk kraan!) reden... End of quest for this day... Geaccompagneerd door dorpsvrouw naar grote weg gelopen - 40 min lopen, echt niet ver, zo’n 5 km rekende Feye uit) (zij droeg Feye’s tas, terwijl ik mijne had, toen ik F na een tijdje vroeg mijne over te nemen, bood zij onmiddellijk aan die over te nemen, AEDC droeg niks, bood op gegeven moment, toen F duidelijk vermoeid raakte, tas steeds van ene naar andere schouders overtilde, aan om tas te nemen. Anyway, vrouw hoort duidelijk last van man te dragen...). Lopend met AEDC gepraat over de verschillende (landbouwkundige) projecten in zijn EPA: FIDP (Farm income diversification project van overheid/EU; Blantyre synod, ik geloof beide involved in promoting agro-businesses). Interessant! Tijdje op minibus gewacht, in donker in Balaka boma aangekomen, slapen in Mlambe motel (1900 MK voor 2 persoonskamer, zonder tv, met eigen badkamertje, incl ontbijt).

Woensdag August 13

Gray stond zowaar om 8 uur bij Mlambe motel, met 2 nieuwe banden. AEDC opgehaald, naar Sanudi gereden, binnen uur zaten nieuwe banden erop - Gray had in Balaka jongen geregeld om met ons
mee te gaan om t werk te doen. Ondertussen met AEDC [Phalula] gegaan over de agro-businesses [FIDP] that he mentioned yesterday. Bee-keeping for honey, livestock production, casave. Niet erg indrukwekkend, was indruk die hij gaf. Misschien nog even verder met DADO bespreken. Als research question iets is van: “Impact of income-generating project for women farmers on HIV risky behavior”...

AEDC beloofde gisteren om ’s avonds nog over geschikte dorpen voor mijn onderzoek te denken/bellen. Had hij duidelijk toch niet gedaan. Stelde wederom Kumkwawa voor, waar ICRISAT project begon. Wel dicht bij weg alleen. Na wat doorvragen blijken daar veel projecten te zijn, ook FIDP, Blantyre Synod, en ?? Maar geen groot percentage FHHs. Mthengomwacha, naast Kumkwawa, same story, maar kleiner en meer FHHs. In beide dorpen even gaan kijken toen auto gemaakt was. Ook erg verspreid, en idd dicht bij weg. Kumkwawa iets beter, qua verspreiding. Zaten veel mensen om een open plek te wachten in schaduw van bomen, hier en daar. Op open plek 3 stoelen. AEDC ging even de auto uit om uit leggen wat wij er deden (“om roddels te vermijden” ??) en vroeg gelijk over aard van opkomende meeting: een afgevaardigde van politieke partij zou komen - we hadden even ervoor idd een mooie auto met vlaggetjes over de dirt roads zien gaan. Want verkiezingen coming up (mei 2009). “Geven ze dan spullen, om mensen naar meeting te trekken?” Ja, e.g. blankets voor de elderly.

Phalula gewoon niet echt geschikt, besloot ik. TE food insecure, te nabij de grote weg, charcoal sale grootse overlevingsstrategie. AEDC weer naar kantoor gebracht en zelf terug naar Balaka waar we bandenspanning in nieuwe banden gingen verbeteren (in dorp gewoon met hand opgepompt). Benzinctreek bleek naar DADO etc kantoor. Even naar binnen om Ms Mattiya (Crops Officer) te groeten. Had al via via vernomen dat ik mn plan had veranderd, even though in Mpalisi section de villagers al gesenstized waren over mijn komst, en er een geschikt huis was gevonden (bij katholieken in Utale, ofwel NIET geschikt volgens mijn criteria, maar de hunne...). Situatie uitgelegd, en DADO gaan begroeten. Bleek ik toch nog niet ontmoet hebben, eerder alleen de assistant DADO. Met hen beide en Ms Mattiya nogmaals alles uitgelegd. DADO zei dat ik ook echt hun had kunnen bellen toen car strandde, zij zijn dichterbij (“Als je op ICRISAT uit Lilongwe moet wachten, kan je al dood zijn” haha...), “je hoort bij ons” heel aardig! Vroeg waarom professors dan hadden geadviseerd van eerste plan af te zien en toch maar voor een dorp met ICRISAT project te gaan. Gezegd dat ik beter van positie within ICRISAT gebruik kon maken, van binnenuit alle documenten accessen enz. En zowel tegen AEDC als deze mensen gezegd dat ik onderzoek wil doen naar “the causes and consequences of the differences in food sec status of women farmers within one community”. Maar misschien goed om terug naar DADO te gaan en veel verder in detail te treden en zijn advies te vragen over mogelijk geschikte onderzoekslocatie...

Op advies van Ms Mattiya, en met haar, naar AEDC van Rivirivi gegaan, waar ICRISAT ook groundnuts project heeft. AEDC was er niet, assistant AEDC wel, tevens AEDO van ?? en ??,. Had keuirge lijst van ICRISAT project dorpen, wanneer project gestart, aantal HHs, MHHs en FHHs. Foto van gemaakt om t niet allemaal over te hoeven schrijven.

Ms Mattiya 12 jaar AEDO geweest, waarvan 2 jaar assistant AEDC, in Zomba, toen - 2 jaar geleden-gelijk Crops Officer geworden.
Donderdag 14 Augustus

Naar DADO? Uitleggen over onderzoeksdoel. Aangenomen bij ICRISAT om onderzoek te doen naar impact AIDS on small scale agriculture and food security. Unfamiliar with agriculture and Africa, so first reading of academic literature on topic and documents of development agencies. Found issue well studied and analyzed, saw no potential contribution. Found some mention about other way around impacting: food insecurity in AIDS pandemic. Fact that pandemic is so enormous in only part of world where poverty and hunger have increased. Mention of poor women resorting to transactional sex for survival. High awareness of HIV and AIDS, but distant threat compared to direct hunger and starvation. But little researched. Advocated that women should be empowered and have independent income as way forward. Want to understand whether increased livelihood security for rural women indeed leads to safer sexual behavior. So, need community where women have been able - trough project and other means such as beer selling - to increase independent income...

Dinsdag 19 August 2008

Harry Msere komt zelf uit Phalula EPA en vertelt dat zijn officiele dorp, in Mtengomwacha Section, slechts een onderdeel is van een grotere conglomeratie. Maar geregistreerd als apart dorp ivm fertilizer subsidy coupons!

Vrijdag 22 augustus 2008 [hopefully meeting DADO and select research site!]

Will not be explicit about the HIV/AIDS aspect to avoid stigma, as main part of study will be on understanding “causes and consequences of differences in food security status within one community” hence, need community where some have benefited substantially from project while other have, for some reasons, not participated or benefited.

Make clear that this is a research, not a development project, hence no direct benefits!!!

Village criteria:

- Successful agricultural development project that benefited part of the women
- In relatively food insecure EPA & section
- Relatively high percentage of FHHs
- Average population size/total number of HHs
- Nuclear /conglomerate - not too scattered
- Mobile phone network
- Average distance from tarmac road
- No GVH
Preferably female VH

Met with DADO who had read my email with detailed description of research plans and need for community where agricultural development project had been/is successful - to gain insights in relationship between increased food security and risky sexual behavior. He had thought of a potentially good village - “hope you can not decline this one...”. Sent Ms Mattiya with us to visit it. First passed by AEDC of Bazale, based at other side of Balaka boma, Mr Stone. Had himself just returned from field with JICA visitors, but gave green light to go there accompanied by Ms Mattiya. Already informed me that is was a very small village: 28 HHs, of which only 9 FHHs. Many projects going on, FIDP and ICRISAT, among many others. “Why so many NGOs and project in such a small village?” I asked Ms Mattiya and Gray. Because of active (female) village headman. Plays important role in effort put in by community, which attracts NGOs. Gathers community to attend meetings/demo’s etc, tells them how to behave, orders them what to do, when to have things done etc, leading role, sets example. If he or she is not interested, little will happen, little villagers will put in effort.

Village looked prosperous indeed, at the middle of the day 2 men where actually building a brick wall! When I asked whether there were also food insecure HHs - for me to compare, to understand the differential impacts of a development project - the village head(wo)man assured me there were. According to her only 6 HHs (including her own) are currently food secure. To proof we visited 2 “food insecure” HHs. One, she told me in English when there, had 7 children and their maize was already finished. However, they had a khola full mbuzi, I saw. Every HH had received a goat through the HIPC project. Aaah, but a goat sells for 3000 MK, they cannot feed their family with these up to the next harvest! Only short-term relief... Nice women though, felt ok. The other HHs of 3 had only little maize left in their nkholwe, and a bright new one, different model, like a basket up side down on a cement platform. Were also building a new house. ? Yes but - protested VH and Ms Mattiya - that you’re food insecure doesn’t mean that you should just sit around and do nothing, you can just continue building a new house, for example. Burn bricks themselves and husband is a builder. “Some burn bricks, some do ganyu,” VH said later/earlier, about HHs that find themselves without enough maize to get them to next harvest. “Food insecure” does thus not necessarily mean that they will suffer, will go hungry!!!! Only that they currently have no large enough stock of maize to last them till next harvest...

In this village, Nkomba (also described in FIDP newsletter) in Sosola section, no pump, but tap to get water. I could stay in house next to VH, big and luxurious, property of VH, surrounded by brick wall - not pleasant. And only 2,5 km from tarmac road. And signposted from tarmac road as “model village” - nowhere near average thus.

Next village, also targeted by both FIDP and ICRISAT, called Kanyoza, also in Sosola section, male VH. Very large, endless houses, not possible to get to know all of them. 219 HHs, of which about 60 FHH. Really to big. Pepani, I feel I am becoming a pain in the ass to government staff...

AEDC Bazale looks through his list of villages and suggests Mudzi A in XXXX section. 74 HHs, of which 48 FHH. Targeted by FIDP iig. Quite far from tarmac road, but still mobile phone
In Mudzi A I wanted to verify that there were certain projects going on. Ah no, said one young man, there was a project, he then admitted, but left. Only when he understood that I was looking for a site where a project was indeed going on, did he emphasize there actually was. Without any shame oid. I later asked Ms Mattiya and Gray [ICRISAT driver] why he had first denied. “Because of you!” Ms Mattiya laughed, he thought that I would come with another project, wanted to look deprived, in need of more assistance. “That’s what keeps Malawi from developing,” complained Gray (something he says about many things), “also problem that ICRISAT often encounters, you give out seeds, and when you come back they say that there had been a drought, had been ill etc etc - make up reasons for not being able to give back loan.”

According to Ms Mattiya three quarters of villages in Balaka district targeted by FIDP. Gray says later that FIDP approached ICRISAT for groundnut seeds and seed revolving funds activities. Will start with 300 villages this year, more next year. FIDP had requested enough seed for 3000 villages, but impossible, especially because of long dry spell last rainy season.

Want to check out Mpilisi EPA tomorrow, as Bazale is least food insecure of Balaka district, while Mpilisi is one of most (Utale and Phalula most, but disqualified because not reachable in rainy season and too scattered respectively). And densely populated, thus villages more nuclear. Passed by AEDC Mr Ntawanga’s house to request his assistance for tomorrow, although it is Saturday - no problem, he said. He was only temporarily replaced by Ms Chikwathu while he was in school, taken back his position now...

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<th>Name &amp; FHHs</th>
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<td>Mpepho, Vpilisi</td>
<td>no</td>
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<td>80</td>
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<td>FIDP &amp; RISAT</td>
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<td>Kind of</td>
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<td>60% (48)</td>
<td>yes</td>
<td>10-20</td>
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<td>FIDP</td>
<td>76</td>
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<td>Molosi, M pilisi</td>
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<td>65% (65)</td>
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<td>good</td>
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<td>2</td>
<td>71% (153)</td>
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Saturday 23 Aug
Met with Mr Ntawanga, AEDC of Mpilisi, kind & intelligent young man. Had already thought about my criteria, but had overlooked criterium “average size”... Village he selected, based on largest impact/most FAO activities, holds over 400 HHs. In Mpilisi FAO and FIDP target villages were partly chosen because of large size (19 villages in total planned to be targeted by FIDP, although not all have yet, or only recently) - and here policy that in each village only one project, for new project villages are selected that are not already targeted by other projects.

FAO focusing on food sec, FIDP on income generation

Monday 25 Aug

Chosen Mudzi A village in XXX section (total of 2181 HHs: 1248 MHH, 898 FHH) in XXX EPA. Mr Stone is AEDC of XXX, Mr Chikombo is the AEDO of XXX. Ms Mattiya and I passed by his house on Friday 22nd of Aug late afternoon to inform him about our visit to Mudzi A, but he was out. Small lonely house on sand road from Balaka boma to Mudzi A.

People are already preparing their fields, as rains may start as early as October in the South. And because of last year’s dry spells, yields will be finished early this year. Already now some HHs are out of maize, and others have only little left, as I saw in Nkomba. Gray said October, Nov & Dec are worst, if rains have been good, first crops can be eaten from field in January (pumpkin, groundnuts)

Called with AEDC Mr Stone when Mr Chikombo seemed to understand very little of my questions...

FIDP activities in Mudzi A: soya beans & chili production, goat rearing

AEDO: Already 50% of HHs in Mudzi A buying their maize, no own produce left because of dry spells last year. AEDC expects by end of September almost all HHs out of own maize, having to buy. Cassava is only grown sparsely, and all sweet potatoes have already been harvested and eaten. Ganyu will be available, but is sign of desperation, keeping farmers from attending own fields and so perpetuating poverty.

August 27, 2008

Last preparatory visit to Mudzi A village, this time to select house. Village headman had already been informed by AEDO Mr Chikombo, and identified a house where we could live in. Two bedrooms and a living room, front and back door, iron sheets roof (which is very convenient in rainy season, grass thatched roofs will leak, says Gertrude), a brick kitchen and toilet outside. No bafa [bathing place] yet, no tree nearby for shade... Bafa, kitchen roof en holes in house wall will be fixed for 2000 MK, monthly rent is 1500 MK. Owner is man who left for South Africa 2 years ago, in case he would return in coming months he can stay with his wife who moved to her home village after he left.

Majority in Mudzi A is Yao. Today the initiation of girls, which may take several weeks during which they sleep together in one house and are advised about respecting their parents and future husband, and not being afraid for sex with men, ended with a parade of drumming, dancing and singing villagers. Usually/traditionally the girls are now advised to practice what they were told about: sex. For some reason the age for girls to become initiated is younger than before. It used to be 12/13 years, now sometimes girls of only 7 years old are already initiated.
Gertrude is from Ngoni tribe.

Call Mr Stone (very active AEDC, according to Oswin Madzonga and Albert Chamango [ICRISAT staff members], are clearly very positive about him) to ask about neighboring village to Mudzi A Mudzi B: FIDP/other dev projects? HHs? FHHs?: No dev projects, 64 HHs, 52 MHHs, 12 FHHs.

Dimba vs dambo: Gertrude explains that there is a difference between dimbo and dambo gardens. One is dampy, humid, swampy soil near river; other is near river, but watered by farmers with water from river…

August 27 2008: Car ride with Gertrude Finyiza from Lilongwe to Balaka

Born in 1985 (11 July) in Mangochi. Mother originally from Dedza, father from Mangochi. One older brother, 3 older sisters (triplets), Gertrude is youngest. Father died when she was 5 years old, does not know reason of death. The Roman Catholic Italians running the orphanage that her father helped starting up (?) offered to pay for Gertrude’s primary and secondary education. Yao’s like sex, and marry several wives, only think about marriage, not education. Even though Ngoni themselves, sisters where affected by Yao friends they hang around with, also wanted to marry young. Both mother and Gertrude tried to advise them against it, but to no avail. Sisters only went to primary school and married young. However, when one of their husbands (a Yao) wanted to indeed also marry another wife, the mother took her daughters to her home village in Dedza. Their land was occupied though, but as the mother was the sister of the that-time-chief of the village, the occupiers eventually left and the family could take it again. Sisters quickly remarried. But in the village, people don’t do much, just stay. Work the land a little, but need fertilizer etc. Gertrude was only one better educated, but even after she left for Lilongwe to work there she only managed to financially help her mother, not also her sisters. The sisters grow Irish potatoes, and go twice a week to the market at the M1 between Dedza and Lizulu (from that market Gertrude takes bicycle taxi for half an hour to reach home village, 50 MK). One of the husbands makes and sells mats. Her mother used to work as a midwife, but not anymore, is old now, wants to rest. Does keep chickens for a widow-chicken-rearing-club she is member of. Told Gertrude she cannot work as hard as before anymore, expects more support from Gertrude.

Gertrude left Dedza 3 years ago, to become house girl at a Malawian family (nanny, cook, clean etc). With the money she made there she bought a telephone with which she opened a telephone boot. She also worked at Monsanto from 4 months, growing their maize seeds and recording the growing of the plants - was only a temporary job. Before I hired her, she worked as a teacher at a private school run by someone from Gertrude’s church (Seventh Day Adventists, although parents Roman Catholic, but where she grew up no RC church around, hence joined SDA, only difference is that the SDAs go to church on Saturday ipv Sunday) who saw Gertrude was just staying, and asked to come teach. Taught knitting, English, ChiChewa, mathematics. Earned 8000 MK per month - quite good money actually! Pays 800 MK rent per months for a small 2-room house in Area 25, cooks on charcoal. Has in house one small side table and chair, some pots and buckets, cutlery, plastic flowers, bed & mattress, clothes hanging on wall, row of shoes, (cheapest Celtel) cell phone. Helps mother with money for fertilizer and soap etc. To do this she sends money to bank account of cousin who has proper job and travels to Dedza every now and then, or goes herself.
When I asked if she can go back to her job as private teacher after this temporary assignment ends, she said in resolute voice: “No! will get more education” Has been looking for money for further education in the last year, this is her opportunity. She will earn 25.000MK per month (Sept - March is 7 months = 175.000MK), and have little expenses while working (accommodation and food are paid for), so in the end - she had already calculated - she can pay for the one year training needed to get a diploma (costs about 75.000 MK excl examination fees and living expenses). Wants to specialize in Rural & Community Development or HIV/AIDS Counseling - [both fit in well with the current research project she will work for, wonder why she mentions these, strategy to increase chances to find job, as these go well with work experience, or to please me?].

Gertrude Has no boyfriend, “next time”. So she will not get disturbed, se she can take care of herself. How will boyfriend disturb you, he can help you take care of yourself, no? Because of sexual behavior, can get pregnant and wants to be educated first.

Gertrude’s Opinion about risky sexual behavior of rural women: Need more knowledge, enlightenment, have not been educated/been to school, backward [not word that she used].

Leiden, 24 juli 2008

Leiden, 24 juli 2008

Wild niet promovere for sake of research: hands on werken, praktischer, in direct contact met mensen voor wie je het doet. Maar nu, na wat meer te hebben gezien van ontwikkelingswereldje liever ‘begrijpen’ ipv/naast aanpak. Met name: waarom werkt het niet, waar gaat het allemaal mis? Dus toch wetenschapskant/beschouwend, maar met praktische inslag, gericht op verbeteren van praktijk.

Op ICRISAT praten over deze vraag. Opinies/inzichten over waarom nog steeds zo grootschalige honger ondanks werk van o.a ICRISAT? + specifiek over project in Balaka. Dus toch ook inderdaad maar project van ICRISAT, met enquiry into effect on “women empowerment”-idee: aan de kaak stellen of toegenomen oogst/winst/onafhankelijk inkomen leidt to enige verandering in veiligheid van seksueel gedrag.

Sept 1, 2008  Lilongwe to Mudzi A village

Fluffy furniture at ‘meubelboulevard’ Lilongwe cost between 80.000 - 100.000 MK for set of ¾ (couch & chairs), estimates Gray [ICRISAT driver]. But bad quality, he adds. He bought his at South African import shop, in 2000 for 70.000 MK and more in 2004 for 100.000, “but this set now costs 300.000!”. Indeed he has the walls of his spacious living room fully lined with big couches. “Still in good chape, and can be replaced by new ones whenever wanted if some top up is paid.”

Late arrival, women said they had been waiting for us around 12 AM, started singing in house to welcome us anyway, agreed to meet tomorrow for real welcoming and introduction.

Settled in house, bafa was made, roof on kitches, holes in wall repaired for 2000 MK. Houserent 1500
MK per month. House of second born son of GVH, who has been in South Africa for 2 years now, wife moved back to home village, his son seems to be living in simple small house next to our iron-sheet-
2-bedroomed house (why not in this big house??). Currently stays with grandparents to help take care of sick grandfather and because grandmother cannot manage to bring him food before dawn (Ramadan!).

GVH is mother of owner of house, came to check on us in evening, saw her coming through bushes with parafine lamp (difficult to get parafin, as there are no filling stations near, people will have to go to Balaka boma). Saw no other lights in dark: some people simply have none, said Gertrude, only light a stick when they really need to see, for example where they will lay down to sleep. Others have fence around house, blocking view on lights. GVH told about sick husband, had taken him to hospitals (go to health clinic nearby, otherwise Balaka hospital or Liwonde hospital), but to no avail. She was born here, divided Mudzi B village is several villages with each their own headmen, whom she appointed. Chief of Mudzi A village is her younger brother.

Gertrude speaks with girl walking back from borehole, asks her whether she goes to school. No, mother doesn’t send her, waiting to be married. About 9 years old... Gertrude also surprised/appalled. Had earlier spoken about Yao initiation rites for girls, saying that these are now for younger girls than before.

Muslims, including GVH, are now fasting.

Grandson of GVH lives in simple small house next to ours, but not these days because grandfather is ill and grandmother cannot manage to bring the boy food to his house in early morning hours (because of fasting).

Gertrude: women usually get up at about 5 AM, sweep, wash body (if there is water, otherwise first fetch water), make tea for breakfast.

**September 2, 2008**

Gertrude was up little after 5 AM, put mkeka [bamboo mat on which she sleeps] away, swept outside. When I got up around 5.45 she lit fire (anayatsa moto) and put on metal bucket with water. When I washed she went to fetch more water - were not as many women at pump as yesterday afternoon, told her now that yesterday the tap in [nearby village] wasn’t giving water, so then these women all come to the borehole at Mudzi B village to pump up water. Tried to sweep ants away again - to no avail. Warmed water for herself to wash too. Put pan with water to boil for tea, which we drank at mkeka on veranda, by then was already 8 AM, while GVH had yesterday villagers would be gathering at 7 AM at our house incl chiefs under her group village headmanship. We went to house of Mudzi A vlg (on way Gertrude pointed out a group of young girls playing --> not in school...), he indeed said he was late. Chatted there for a bit.

He has been chief of Mudzi A for 1 year now, before him the first born son of GVH was the first chief if Mudzi A (second born is owner of the house we are staying in). Last year also this son decided he was still young and wanted to try his luck in South Africa [WHAT ARE THESE BOYS DOING IN SA???, handed over chief responsibilities to uncle, brother of GVH - probably in consultation with mother GVH. Man himself was born in Machinga in 1949, shares father with GVH but different mothers, his was amayi akulu ["big mother"/first wife], hers was amayi ang'ono ["little/younger mother"]). Which explains why he was born elsewhere than she (she born in Mudzi B village). Father was businessman traveling around, having various families at various places, and being Yao, that is permitted. Current chief had first son in Machinga, when he was still
very young. Later married a woman, had 7 children with her. Came to Mudzi A about 7 years ago when he was ill to find medicine, without wife. After he got better, GVH urged him to stay here, leaving wife, which he did, remarried 5 years ago (with Hamra) with woman with 3 kids of whom youngest is still in school. Have no kids together. Children come to visit him sometimes, from Liwonde. First wife also remarried.

Mudzi B village was subdivided, he explains, because the government (boma) ordered so, does not know when, did not stay here at that time.

His [chief Mudzi A's] house is relatively small and simple, compared to some others in the village (although all of them have grass roofs, some are just bigger). I was surprised by this, and questioned Gertrude about it. We will find out when we wander around, she said, can't ask him directly, some people just work harder...

When we came back home after seeing Mudzi A chief, we found GVH with 3 other women sitting in front of our house. Were the chiefs of surrounding villages, all under her GVH, wanted them to know me and Gertrude (alendo athu – our guests) and other way round - in case we meet each other on the road, and for safety purposes. Mudzi A chief mentioned word “chipongwe” several times - means something like misconduct, are they apparently scared of, that we will be bothered by drunkards, are stolen from by lazy poor. Chief also mentioned during this meeting with other chiefs (Mudzi A has the only male chief! came with other woman) that we should be given precedence when drawing water at pump. Another man also joined this meeting, he was also called when we visited to select house - was called mlangizi by others. Gertrude translated it as Leader and Adviser - appointed by government, advises also other groups of villages? Headed meeting, addressed by chiefs with “chairman”. We were asked to introduce ourselves, signed visitors book of mlangizi (first date July 2007, exactly 1 page of big notebook = A4) only Malawian names, seemed mainly extension people, oa also for FIDP, saw mushroom project mentioned, which had failed, according to Ms Mattiya - too dry, need moisture...), then GVH spoke about how we were her/their children (grabbed one of her breasts to symbolize motherhood/own child).

On our way to grocery shop were called for chatting by woman walking behind us with bunch of young girls on their heads. Woman told us she is from Mangochi, came to visit grandmother in Mudzi B village and as he is not used to not making money on a day, she brought usipa and other fish to sell. Other fish was already sold, usipa apparently not liked here, not sold any yet. Now went to market (said msika) to try sell there, girls showed here the way. Where she eventually settled can hardly be called market, 1 grocery store (cookies, soap, sweets, ant poison), someone selling cassava, and a bit further down the road a young woman selling tomatoes, in between a bicycle repair shop. Behind the cassava and now also hips of usipa on an empty bag a whole bunch of young girls and some women sitting. Usipa business woman is married, but husband works in shop in SA. She had been there with him, also doing usipa business: selling the Malawi lake fish to Malawians working in SA and missing their home food. Would make trips from Lake Malawi to South Africa, up and down to sell, sometimes with bus, sometimes in lorry. But bus is easier, she says, because there is place to put all her merchandise. Fell ill, had to return to home in Malawi...

Some people already clearing their fields now. Everybody should do that, according to Gertrude, better to have the fields prepared before rains come, so that you can plant at first rains. Others wait until first rains before they start clearing and making ridges. Chief said this morning that most villagers are gone to their fields. Indeed early in the morning when I got up, I saw someone far away working on his/her field. [--> should take pictures before all starts to get green and lush, or at least cleared and
Meeting:

Agreed with chief this morning to meet at 2 PM today, which would leave time for him to gather his people. Meeting should not be held at our house, he had said, because it should be clear that we are here for Mudzi A vlg only, and not Mudzi B vlg. Went towards his house at 2 exactly, fearing that it would take long for the others to come. Indeed were among the first - an elderly man and woman were sitting there already, chairs and mat were ready for us. From then on people quickly started to come over to house of Mr Ntawanga - the selfproclaimed extension worker of the village (volunteering, out of interest, finds knowledge from other alangizi/demonstrations/projects). Chief complained and joked about “telling people to come at 2 and you can be sure they don’t show up until 3.” When the big mat was full of women (about 30, some still came after we had started; there were only 5 men: chief, Mr Ntawanga, leader of goat club, the elderly man who was there even before us, looking well-to- do with nice socks and shoes, and an old man who looked poor) Mr Ntawanga asked us if we could start. He then asked one of the woman to pray, and spoke himself, introducing all leaders of the various clubs that exist in Mudzi A:

Mushroom club, led by Mr Ntawanga
Goat rearing club, led by Mr Tulipesi
Groundnuts club, led by Victoria
Soya beans club, led by Kima (very old woman) Village
Development committee (VDC)

Then I gave speech, introducing myself, Gertrude and research work. In speech I said that I would want to start with a group discussion in which they should explain differences between poorer and better off HHs:

Poor (Ovutika): Lack of food (“akugona ndi njala” – they go to sleep hungry); poor clothes; leaking pots; plastic spoons and plates (melt on fire, wind can take them); no blankets (small cloth/only mat); have to fetch water very far; difficult to get fertilizer (get coupons, but still difficult for them to find enough money to buy); not enough maize seeds to plant; cultivate late because have to do ganyu [osalima mwachangu chifukwa cha ganyu], are old/weak/ill; having many orphans to take care of besides own children; many children (5-6) in general as compared to better off HHs that have only few (2-3); difficult to find money for school fees for secondary school; appearance of the house (thin grass roof, holes in the wall, without doors). Chief concluded by mentioning that some men are just lazy, having their wives do all the work, themselves just waiting to be fed, and they will be the first to start eating! (laughing). Does not help on the field but is first to demand food (blijkt later ook op hemzelf te slaan! hoewel hij misschien excuus heeft dat hij andere verantwoordelijkheden als chief heeft?).

Better off HHs (Olemera): enough maize & goats which they may sell to find money; enough clothes in different colors; nice plates = emaile, with flower print; good looking blankets & bed; fewer children (2-3); enough soap & body lotion; Iron sheet roof; bicycle (own or taxi) to go to maize mill (instead of walking with maize on head); have jobs themselves; high quality cell phone; do different types of businesses such as goat or cotton selling, after selling can get enough food for family. Maybe get financial help from relatives in town to buy soap, sugar, clothes. NB Some stay in good house, but still have no food!

[Ellis et al 2003, 1500:
In the context of the Malawian customary tenure sector, the term “better-off” is relative]
and does not necessarily signify wealth or income status much above the poverty line. As revealed by the wealth-ranking exercises conducted in the eight case-study villages, HHs described as well-off are distinguished by having landholdings of 1.5-2 ha, up to 5 cattle, 3-5 goats, hiring nonfamily labor seasonally, owning bicycles, sometimes owning nonfarm service sector businesses, and normally enjoying year round food security. The middle wealth categories to which most HHs were assigned have correspondingly less of all these assets, and shade into increasing reliance on selling labor, and worsening seasonal food insecurity. The poor possess little or no land, no cattle or goats, rely on casual work (called ganyu in Malawi) or safety net transfers to get by, and are food deficit most of the year.

Why differences in wealth status within one community: some have to do ganyu - making them food insecure next season; number of children; marital status (widowed, not married); having relative in town to help financially; God himself makes some poor and some better off (laughing).

Why differences in food security status between villages: Different type of soil (is good in Mudzi A, so even with little rainfall, harvests can be good, clayish soil, still fertilizer is necessary & problem); some make ridges while others don’t.

FIDP activities in Mudzi A vlg: Making ridges; growing mushrooms; making manure; planting trees; goat keeping; soy production. Most impact from goat rearing. FIDP started in 2003 (all people looked at Mr Ntawanga for answer on this question), but is continuation of PROSCAP which started in 2000. Activities are considered to benefit some, those who are willing to participate, used to working hard. Others do not participate because they are too busy: have to take care of husband and/or children [hence, mainly women who participate?], or cannot /do not want to contribute the required amount of money? [how much??].

No clear answer was given on question why some many more FHHs (female headed HHs) than MHHs (male headed HHs) in Mudzi A. Some husbands died... [maybe many elderly women?]. Mr Ntawanga suggested that there had simply never been many men in this village, but many women...

Mr Ntawanga adds at the end of the meeting that food insecurity in Mudzi A is partly a result of the fact that there is only one pump. Women have to wait long time before they can get water, thus come late for meeting [and miss crucial information?], and cannot work on field sufficiently. [+ just used to delaying, adds chief: going to market, cooking etc]

Meeting was closed with another prayer from same woman. Then they continued to discuss the upcoming new school (for which black boards were brought by a big Toyota Hilux pick up with EU sticker during meeting). the chiefs this morning also shortly talked about this issue. Not government school but private.

Gertrude did very well in leading the group discussion, experience as teacher became clear: not afraid of talking in front of big group, looking at them, starting with some chatting, good in explaining what I meant.
Mr Ntawanga: Njala [hunger] worst in Nov, Dec, Jan, Feb: because of heat in Balaka by early March first green maize can be eaten. In Dec most ganyu, in Nov only little, in Jan & Feb none.

PROSCAP concerned with soil improvement --> making manure, planting trees, catch rainwater. In all surrounding villages. In between Proscap and FiDP half a year "kabridge" project. FiDP only continued in villages where population was eager/interested/motivated/participating, which was only Mudzi A. "How come? Why other villages not?" Because of leadership, if leader is not interested, others do not make any efforts, and Mudzi A has a passionate, active leader = him, hence not the formal leader, but someone who stepped up himself...

New school indeed for adults, today first day, students very interested: "By the end of the week I’ll be able to write my name!" Do not need to pay contribution. Gertrude does not know who finances it, heard on radio that teachers work voluntarily, but doesn’t know whether it is true. Not a real school building, just a fence.

weinig zeggen/vragen (Hoe oud is je kind, is het je eerste, komen jullie uit Mudzi B? 6 mnd, 2de, ja), dus veel stiltes. Zij zeggen onderling ook weinig, merken alleen af en toe op: "kind lacht," "hij is vrolijk." Tehen half 6 komt Gertrude terug van hout sprokkelen met 2 meisjes, er wordt dan iets meer gesproken, maar nog steeds niet veel --> Waarom gekomen?? Gertrude: voor eigen lol, en uit interesse. Zodra ze weg zijn vertelt Gertrude dat 1 gesprekje ging over: 1 vd jongens (17-20 jr) tegen 1 vd meisjes (die niet meer naar school gaat, uit zichzelf gestopt in St7, 15 jaar) dat ze toch heeft gezegd te willen trouwen? Man kwam haar vandaag zoeken... Vrouw met baby (Pamela) zegt dat dit geen gesprek is voor hier, bij vreemden/gasten. Later grapt 1 vd jongens tegen zwangere vrouw (Ada) hoe het toch komt dat al haar partners verdwijnen: 2de zwangerschap en net als bij eerste is man nu verdwenen. Wederom zegt Pamela: geen onderwerp om hier te bespreken! Ook zwangere vrouw zelf zegt dat hij dat maar bij haar huis moet vragen, is geheim. Jongens grappen verder dat beide mannen misschien straks met een cellphone voor haar terugkomen, en fiets. "Ik kan voor mezelf zorgen, als ik iets wil koop ik het zelf wel." (Ik heb heb niet horen bitsen, maar was ook wel even weg om me te wassen). Verdedigde zichzelf/man wel even door te zeggen dat hij gateman in Balaka is, dat ze nu rijk zullen worden.


Young girl passed by with 5 MK in hand, group on porch said she begged that money from a boy. They asked her where she was going: grocery. "Ah, you are going to buy sweets, you begged money from a boy!"

One of women chatting/hanging on our veranda came back just after departing to ask, down on heels and with soft voice to Gertrude, whether we want to buy a chicken - asked for the other woman who had been afraid to ask us herself... According to Gertrude here much cheaper than in town: in LL 700/800, here maybe 300/400. Also tomatoes etc.
Sept 3, 2008

GVH took me to accompany her to first house after ours where she was going to borrow a bag (thumba) for maize that she bought (?). I think the woman of that HH (which looked fairly good, a number of well maintained structures, with grass roofs though) told me that both she and Group Village Headman joined the FIDP activities undertaken in Mudzi A: Mbuzi & tree nursery. “Chitukuko!” old bleef u herhalen [progress, development]. Was grinding maize in grinder (mtondo) by hand (kusinja chimanga) to make porridge, after that kupeta: separating bran from kernels.

Where do I want to go?? It’s clear from MDICP journals that transactional sex is quite normal aspect of courtship / relationships especially for the young thus not necessarily related to poverty. Also few comments that I have heard here about topic confirm “Yes happens (girls like money too much - not like old days when they behaved appropriate), richer boys / men try to seduce / attract poor girls with money, but not only poor girls behave this way. Question whether increased independent income will lead to safer sexual behavior does make sense to me ... Although this exchange of sex for money/ gifts is mainly among younger (school) girls, I got impression. Although Eveless (old woman) said it also happens among adults and even the elderly. Met today a young woman (25) Livia: divorced and with 6 months old baby from man from other village who is married to other wife. She has own little business of buying tomatoes and masamba [green leafs] at dambo [river shore] near Balaka then selling in Mudzi A village. Besides cultivating land to get food (local maize and nandolo [legumes] for ndiwo [relish]) and money through cotton. Does he support her / child in any way? Why did she sleep with him? Does he still visit her / do they still slept together sometimes? How &When did she find out if he is married elsewhere? What did she go to do when she visited him in his village? Maybe he hid from her that he was married in beginning says Gertrude.

FIDP does not seem to have substantial impact. Goat project is named by women in meeting as activity with biggest impact --> many people have goats now. But are not allowed to sell! Only to government/FIDP people who will come one day especially with this purpose, said Agnessi Musitafa (don’t know if its true). Too bad that there are no honey and eggs activities! There are in other village XXX. But the wealthy house of the village head did not feel good. And only honey: poultry house was only being built now. I should await interviews. Maybe other small scale businesses? But also soy production has not given women any benefit (but knowledge) as it is only grown on club field, and sold to pay for rent of field and partly kept to plant coming season. Shit, that was main criteria; a project (agricultural) that benefited women’s income..

Mr Chikombo shortly passed by with Mr Ntawanga. Said that tomorrow there will be a field day in [small crossroads market] village on manure making - but not a FIDP activity / rearing is just starting, but bee keeping since year before last, honey being sold now commercially. Why not in Mudzi A? Villagers not interested, all activities initiated only after interest by villages is expressed. Then asked Mr Ntawanga why villages of Mudzi A had no interest in honey or egg production. Ah, problems in communication - he answered (?), Vague, unclear.. Mr Chikombo said : May be because there is no forest near where bees can find food.

B. [nearby village] where honey is produced and sold - less than 3 km away. May be visit honey - club? What kind of women participates? What happens with income? Does it in any way change gender relations? Would need longer term project to really see any impact.. Can even be opinions of
participating women. Any women in Mudzi A village with substantial, long term business? Or in
surrounding villages? What is their opinion about impact of independent income on gender relations
/ their position or behavior vis-a-vis men? “What is impact of rural women running small scale
business on their position/ relationship vis-a-vis men? “gender perceptions/relations ((riskiness of sexual behavior?)

Other interesting possible questions for interviews (to at least give everyone her soap & salt):

- Knowledge of HIV -women under 50?- this info can be retrieved from MDICP... (differentiated per district?)
- Condom use
- Sex with how many partners? husband? But come on, how honest would people be about this??

Thursdays are market day in [small crossroads market]. Can maybe find business women there!!
What kind of business there? Ask all of the selling women

- Name age, where do they live?
- Is it their own business or employed?
- Since when in (any hand of) business?/ employed
- Where do they get product?
- Sell only in [small crossroads market] on Thursdays(each?) or also other markets/
- Married (Yes: first? - No : ever married?(why divorced)
- What do they use money for?
- (In what way) Are business women different from other rural women?
- Opinion or How has business changed your life? Did relationship with husband change?

A whole bunch of girls came on our veranda again, Gertrude was there knitting and just listened to
what was being said. They spoke about a woman who came yesterday to the [small crossroads
market] with only a chitenje on, she then opened her chitenje and asked “ Who will sleep with me for
some money?? “ Also at borehole today this story was discussed. I asked whether she is a mad
woman, but women girls said no. husband is South Africa.

During Ramadan all Muslims here go to Mosque at 6 PM - good chance for girls to chat with boys,
they said themselves. Girl of finding firewood - who stopped school and wants to get married - was
seen with a certain boy. Other girls said that this is a good time for her to find a good husband
because of Ramadan and all muslims meeting every evening.

A woman passed by with tomatoes. Girls & women on veranda commended: That one, she is going
to sell tomatoes rather than take care of her husband- Always goes to same place/village to sell,
where she is seen with a certain men..”

Meeting on registering for receiving fertilizer compons. This year only for the very poor & lame. Fert
now 800 MK per bag. Chief is probably the one deciding who deserves (falls in categories “ very poor”
or “ lame”) - but to keep friends could say every body falls within these categories.. Gertrude
5 Sept - Notes

In Dec weeding ganyu - will have to keep track of frequency: do same spend more time on field of others than own? Whole days? Does own field indeed suffers?

Why is it good to have a bicycle? By HHs with only blanket, no maize left, but bicycle.

Many people get quite large amount of money after selling cotton (app. May 2008) and now face the problem of lacking food, must do ganyu for only 100MK a day!

Who participate in which FIDP activity seems to be decided / ordered by chief. Only 10 people are to participate per activity, some in multiple activities.

Received twice 3 eggs, plate of g/nuts, tomatoes, papaya, cassava root from various informants. Wife of chief on GVH brought firewood.

Today 2 interviews with women who very quickly married after meeting. Chikondi (28) agreed to marry second husband when he proposed to her at the market where she was selling veggies at first time they met. *Wanted husband to stop jealousy / gossiping/ suspicion of other women in village that she was receiving their husbands*, didn’t even want to talk with her at pump. Further no other benefit to marriage ! (doesn’t bring money old, only sometimes ndiwo). Nelia married in March 2005 at age 17 after meeting 21 years old man at Balaka Market where she was selling “freezes” (lemonade in small plastic bag) on January 25 same year.

Many of the women we spoke to are listed as FHH but are married, have been married for a long time usually ... husbands at least sometimes listed separately, as other HH. From now on have to ask both name of woman and husband, to Check on list.

Visit to GVH in Mudzi B to give some gifts to thank her for letting me stay in her group (salt, sugar, candles, tea, soap), had told us already several times to pass by. Fenced compound, not very big, round with 3 houses: 1 with iron sheets, but because of termites moved to house with grass roof. third small house was of son that departed to SA, just like 2 brothers. Ah, doesn’t know what they are doing there - is often kept hidden, ashamed. going to SA is status, but to have simple job also hekman or even burning bricks! (Laughing) prefer to keep it hidden...

Became GVH 15 yrs ago, divided Mudzi B in 6 villages 14 yrs ago because ordered by the government because too big, too many people, over 1000. Big size of population caused many problems e.g. when maize hand outs came e.g., not enough for everybody. Enlists herself in Mudzi A village (indeed during first visit she said she stayed there), couldn’t say why, I indeed understood well yesterday that she participates in the FIDP projects in Mudzi A: Mbuzi, tree planting (we later saw the trees on her field next to her house.” Ah, for firewood !” said Gertrude, yes confirmed GVH), soy, mushroom.

Husband has already been ill for 2yrs ... But not very, was sitting outside, looked ok. Have been together since very young, GVH said.
We asked about the subsidized coupons - meeting of yesterday. First she said, when asked, that coupons are meant for the very poor (ovutika), but later added “and for all who want them, as long as they indeed have a field to cultivate” It is indeed the chief who lists the people who according to him, deserve to receive. GVH also mentioned people who are ill; which Gertrude translated also AIDS (matenda) [But when distributed on Monday Nov 3, everybody who registered received but at [small crossroads market] through people who came from Balaka. This year not through chiefs - too much stealing. Those people also asked all attendants to report on any bad behavior of their leader (chief /GVH). Most kept quick, but one spoke about GVH Mudzi B, saying that she shared handouts etc among relatives and not other people. People were also angry with her when she recently asked for a football & football uniforms from one of Muluzi’s MP runners who came to campaign at Mudzi B. Could not think of something more useful??]

On Friday market in [nearest tradingcenter] not too far, further down road,” many people.” On Thursdays market in [small crossroads market] at Jasmine junction coming here from Balaka is a smaller market.

Many women washing now at pump, said Gertrude. You have made them very happy by giving them soap. Gertrude says we should double check with Mr Ntawanga about exact procedure of FIDP activities & selection of participants. Especially story about only 10 participants allowed per activity club - interviewees may have thought I was to start another development project.

Ms Eveles said its good to vast during the Ramadan, teaches you to deal /cope / stand hunger.

Gertrude noted that Ms Ntawanga passed by as early as 5 AM to draw water, and did not return till about 7 AM. Herself she likes to go during hottest hours of day, when there are few people at njiko [pump] and ask doesn’t waste much time there...

Started teaching me to knit, outside on mat with young girls (who have been thought ‘needle craft’ at school (before this used to be taught both at primary and sec school, now only at first - if there is someone knowledgeable, I guess). Said that for a full baby outfit (=pants, shoes, hat, vest) one can get about 2000/ 2500 m LL, with big shawl to wrap baby on back about 3000. Jersey for school children 700-900 MK. Croching even more, for set of about 10 kleedjes for on tables and chairs (with flower, apple, pineapple etc) up to 7000 MK. She can finish in 1 week - big money!

Pregnant woman Ada was also at mat, said she hadn’t come earlier because saw headmaster sitting with us. She had decided to leave school last year because she wanted to get married, ashamed to face him, Headmaster had indeed spoken to other girls on mat, saying they should come back to school, to learn English so they could speak with me. Girl who stopped to get married said she would come on Monday.

Sept 6 - Notes

By today we have finished interviewing all Mudzi A HHs on this side of this side of the road (22 HHs). For some reason the rest of the Mudzi A HHs are quite a distance on the other side of the road. One
even first has to pass another village to reach the rest of Mudzi A. This was done so by the GVH, she decided those house over there should fall under the chieftainship of Mudzi A. Indeed the inhabitants of those houses participate in e.g. the FIDP activities that - as far as I know - only Mudzi A - Villagers can join in to. (and the GVH..) And came to the meeting organized for my introduction. Some were in the fenced enclosure next to Mr Ntawanga’s house busy with filling little black plastic bags with black soil - the tree planting club.

In that other part of Mudzi A 13 HHs, all of them Christian, hence go to church tomorrow. Nonetheless, Secretary Victoria (2) of tree club (from other side) said we could go, no problem. Mrs Ntawanga will escort us. Twelve are kind of together, 1 further away.

So in total will interview 35 women... Unless some daughters live apart but are counted as 1 HH. Maybe include Mudzi B, where we live. I have enough soap and salt, brought 80 of each, assuming that Mudzi had 76 HHs, as claimed on the DADO’s list. Or actively look for business women...

**Gertrude when I am gone**

- Keep an eye on MASAF, coupons + FIDP activiteiten
- Record agri activities, especially ganyu
- Gossips about sexual behaviour, adultry, pregnancies
- Strategies to find food / money for food
- More market interviews?
- Missing info interviews
- Check list with Mr Ntawanga to see if we have missed any HH
- Own expenditure + where

Chief Mudzi A came by to bring broom which he bought at [nearest tradingcenter] market today (went for ndiwo), because in town are expensive (30/90 MK) here only 10mk. Found some boys chatting at veranda, then he chased them away, saying that they may have come pretending to chat but actually checking what we have inside to later come and steal. May be their mother had given them some task to do and now they ‘ve run away from it. After they left, I asked him why he chased them: “I know my villagers…” he said, knows exactly what goes on. Boys and girls may come here with the excuse of chatting with us, but actually just to be able to meet each other. We should send away send all boys that come to chat here ... - May cause quarrels from wives married to the visiting boys : “ My marriage is not working, because he goes to meet girls there instead of talking with me. “ + potential thieves. “I know my people … VH said.

After dividing Mudzi B village into 6, some houses were left out. VH of Mudzi A offered / decided to take them in, so that all 6villages had more or less equal size about 50 - 60 HHs

Girl [Thokozani?] that was chatting with 6 on veranda when chief came by, complained to him that she
had asked her GVH to give her some land, a while ago, but still nothing had happened. Wanted him
to interfere / help her out with some land. But he said that it could cause trouble if the VH of Mudzi
A would give land to someone from Mudzi B. She should just wait some more time, be patient - if
still nothing happens they will see what to do.

In NL – check literature on impact of independent income on female sexual behavior / gender
relations. Is village right place for this research ?? - business women at markets ? Or e.g. second hand
clothing traders in villages, such as mother of Teleza, to compare, assess change, impact. Get
impression of non-business village women, especially financial situation and gender perceptions –
retrieve from MDICP. Ask same questions here? Also indepth questions as Waht is/does a good
man/husband/woman/wife? Can you tell me about how you & husband came in relationship? Can
you tell me about one such a quarrel?

Solar op dak voor 2 full days - charged to 14 Volt. Connected to laptop to charge at 5.45 pm, at
12V. Red light of laptop constantly on. = 1 hour charging - battery 80%

Am thinking of perfect situation in Central America : knew where women were coming from through
Master research, found impact of new imagery - perceptions changed. But financial dependence
remained all the same, hence no real change. Now what if such women get independent income? -
maquila’s. Speak language + maguila workers are concentrared in one place. Could just hang around
like with them, wait for insights in their gender verholdingment mannen

So : - weten waar they come from (finacially + gender perceptions / relaties) -
- Change in income (rural business)
- Concentration of women with changed income to join in daily life - or actively find them
because probably live scattered. In - depth interviews + join daily activities/visit a lot

Should see first what will happen in first weeks here. With and without my presence. Leave Gertrude
alone here while I go to Lilongwe to help Feye pack out stuff and move back to Amsterdam. Think ita
la over in Lilongwe and Netherlands. Possibly look more actively for rural business women.

SEPT 7 NOTES

Other Mudzi A part not very far away, across road, first passing house of a older lady who sell
snacks made of fish and flour at the school. Wasn’t in, will talk to her tomorrow before she goes oft for
her business. Then you pass another village called K. - saw many iron sheets. Ms Ntawanga, who
accompanied us, said all these people work(ed) in town. Passing a njiko [pump], cross football field et
voila. Interviewed 7 women today (of whom 2 not head/married to head, but 21 yr old orphan
staying with grandmother who is the one to decide everything, and 22 yr old who moved in with
mother, brothers and sisters after being left by
husband - both are mothers themselves. Should may be come back for grandmother of first as this girl did not know somethings as not- decision maker. - Makes me realize that probably reason why a number of HHs are tested as FHH while married is that when asked who makes decisions, is answered that woman does - as in my interviews...

Ms Ntawanga passed by to say that they have checked their books too, and GVH is indeed not registered as inhabitant of Mudzi A - Although she had said to us she was. Also to Ntawanga’s she had said she was, which Ms J came to tell us earlier today. (may be she wants to interviewed? Or at least included in any project that may come from this..) We than told Ms J that we had already checked our list, but GVH is not on there. Apparently they then went to check their own books and found that indeed she is not listed, as she claimed. We shouldn’t mind her, she does this more often , so as to receive too whenever something is given. She also put on other HHs, that are not here anymore to receive even more (blaming her while also doing it themselves? Said this morning there were 53 HHs in each of the villages subdivided from Mudzi B. Now only 35 (if we counted well), I mentioned. Hmm, anachokachoka ku town [they moved to the city].

Interviewed one woman who does a regular business : Selling mandasi [snack] on Tuesdays at [small crossroads market] and on Friday at [nearest tradingcenter] market, making about 2000 MK profit per month : Has clearly helped her a lot. Small house with grass roof, but radio playing ! Only started last month, so very recent (but already radio). Believes she will not have to do ganyu this year. Too optimistic? Has 1 orphan in house - receives money from Orphan Care project in [nearest tradingcenter] - or is that only for elderly widowed agogo?

Two women (Pamela + Ada) chatting on veranda (1 with babyboy, other pregnant) said they were complained about coming here everyday : ‘You want to subscribe for new project!’ Strange that is a negative thing...

One girl we talked so today had her father die through witchcraft. I asked I why this could be. Some people are jealous of other, e.g. because they have iron sheets, or rich with livestock. Can be dangerous thus, to be / become better off...

Gertrude says: soon people will all be busy in their fields.

Two women I directly asked about impact of business on their lives / difference between bs / non-bs rural women (one beer Brewster, mandasi [snack] seller at markets). said difference was that they can buy their day to day needs like soap, salt, relish while others can’t.

I think that here, among these business women, independent income is there, but not the mind set change ; like what I found in EL Remate- telenvolas changed the gender role perceptions.

Were marriages indeed different in earlier days ? Or also : proposed without really knowing each other, simply because “ wife needs husband, and husband needs wife ” - ask older ladies ! Then no exchange, like now ? What may have caused change?
-30 Mk for phone battery charge at grocery

- Gov teacher salary 9000 - 10 000 MK / month

- Saw Saibi with baby on back and dengu [flat round basket] full of masamba [green leafs] and tomatoes on head in other part of Mudzi A to sell. Bought 6 tomatoes for 20 MK on bundles of masamba for 20 MK

SEPT 8 - NOTES

Still to be interviewed: Wife of son of Eveles + Woman across the street making kanyenya: small dried fish fried in dough. 2 MK / stuk)

On our way back from Mudzi A-II crossed paths with old woman with dengu full of green maize on head. Sold for 15, 20 and 25 MK / stuk. Quite expensive, same price as in LL, says I. Buys at dambo were they are surely much cheaper, thinks Gertrude

Interviewed one older women (56 yr, Meriam) who stays with husband even though he also has another family since 2000 [how did she find out? --> some nights not at home, people told her he went to a certain other house. She asked him, he confirmed] and spends the family income (selling cotton, doing ganyu) on beer. (last yr they couldn’t even buy subsidized fertilizer (she couldn’t get new money through MASAF because of ill -for 3 months.. Seropositive ??). Say she doesn’t want to leave him because of children, has never been with someone else, is getting old herself, she will not be respected .... Has no independent income, when asked why she says its difficult for her to start a business because husband takes all their money for beer.

Interviewed another woman (46, Belita) who decided to leave her first husband in 1986 because he had many zibwezi [girlfriends] and already then people knew about HIV/AIDS and she feared she could become infected. I find it difficult to believe that rural Malawians indeed knew about HIV/AIDS in 1986.. Gertrude agrees. Married second husband because “better to be with 1 than have several boyfriend.” After probing: (“If you have several may receive more help than from only one?”) better I than several because of danger of becoming infected with HIV. **Was therefore happy that one man proposed to her. She made this sound as if he gave her a very special great gift/favour, fact that he was willing to commit himself to her.** Wiling to help her, stay with her, not only after sex. Also proposed by another, brought soap, but had another family she saw, so she refused. She had own business (beer brewing) but still wanted husband for example to build her a house, to help each other (indeed husband sometimes fetches firewood and sells, and was at this very moment building a small structure near their house). This one is faithful she believes, can see that he is not moving around, goes to drink beer, but always back before dark. He is Muslim, she Catholic. She says this one is indeed a better husband than her previous. Spending of the money of her business she decides, she says, as she is the one to know what is needed at that time. But the purchase of radio and bike were decided by him.

I must get familiar with these women, so that eventually we can also talk about more private issues with reasonable chances of honest answers... How??
Continue writing in English so that it can be typed into computer here!

Also interview HHs of Mudzi B (according to GVH 53 HHs - according to Ms Ntawanga less than in Mudzi A) to get know them, to know all women at the njiko [pump] and all women who may visit us here.

Do 2 last Mudzi A interviews today (+ ask Eveles about proposals & marriages in her younger years). Wash clothes tomorrow, may be some farming?? Thursday + Friday interviews with business women at market. Weekend to Lake & Thukwi. Next week type and print revised question list put all interviews in Exell + pack home. Tear 2 more weeks in Mudzi A: interview Mudzi B!! farm + chat +Follow up interviews with selected women.- NL

Also young man washing clothes at pump.

Paul Farmer 2008 " Women & HIV/AIDS."

Different kind of rural business women: (on compu list of business of interviewed women)

- Selling home grow products (no buying involved)
- Buying and selling crops (tomato, masamba, bananas etc) (“kuoda”)
- Process (e.g. mandasi, kanyenya), value - adding
- Initiated by external org’s vs own initiative

Make inventory at markets: - gender balance: more men or women traders?

What kind of business? Which mainly men vs women?

Soap: with 1 bar family can do 1 or 2 cloths washes, usually once a week, so need about 3 or 4 bars per month. About 30 MK / bar.

I bought wholesale 10 bars of soap for 275 MK and 20 bags of salt for 1100mk. Meaning in total the gifts add up to 27,5 + 55mk = 82,5 MK only...

Previous interviewed woman (Nr 20 Filimona) is daughter -in-law of Eveles. After interviewing her husband taught himself to repair bikes, so runs bike repair shops now, had about 9 of them standing there, but still struggling because big family with grandmother and 2 children in secondary school) asked Eveles about proposing and relationships in the past, when she was young. In those days indeed proposing, but usually man would go to the parents of the girl. Tell them he wants to marry her. Then the parents call the girl and tell about proposal, sometimes she wouldn’t want. If she agreed than further agreements were made. Not like now right away sleeping together. Nowadays men just propose women without going through parents knowing, sleep together, so many young girls get pregnant before getting married (But don’t these people know about the danger of HIV/AIDS?) Ah, they know! They speak about it on the radio all the time! But here they say: “Its our time” (and I can choose what to do with myself!) “Ndi nthawi yathu!” She even
doubts whether her own granddaughters will reach Gertrude’s age without already being a mother (grasps her breast). She is proud of Gertrude not having children yet. Do men not propose to her? Amandifuna! laughs Gertrude [they want me!]. How come she doesn’t have children yet? isn’t married yet?. Not my time yet, later. I want to be able to find my own money to provide for my family. I ‘i but here many people dying of Edzi, because of few men with money (e.g. after selling cotton) and girls that are after that money. Nowadays it’s more important to them whether their future husband has a lot of money or not. In past it was about love, chikondi. And people didn’t sleep with each other so soon. Herself she even ran away from her husband the first days after marriage want to sleep in the nkholwe [maize granary]. Then after some days her husband went to complain to her parents who then called her and told her not to be afraid. But these days, many orphans, many orphans … Feels blessed that we have already visited her 3 times (of which 1 was just greeting + quick talk when we passed by after buying out poison at grocery).

When asking the kanyakwita business woman Serena (very proud of being a business woman, of what she has accomplished) whether the business has changed her relationship with her husband, she says defensive “Ah no!. We no! We still stay well together.” But admitted that she decides what to spend money from business on.

Washed clothes at njiko [pump] this morning, many women there, and young man washing his clothes. Most just waiting to draw water, sit on bucket while waiting, some chatting.

Several women brought us firewood already, very sweet (only free gift they can get hold of - or water, as I saw in Thukwi, but pump there was not as far as here). By old lady Chenawe came to greet, but did not want to come empty handed she said.

Keely came yesterday afternoon, spent evening and morning chatting. Sometimes embarrassing. Where have you been in Eastern Europe? What place would you like to go? (New York & Thailand) Doubting whether to become medical doctor or public health specialist? She slept in bed, I on mphasa [mat] with only blankets - did not sleep well, cold (but malarone also keeps me awake), and this is not even cold season..

**EVELES:** Women with own business have their own money don’t have this behavior of going around sleeping with men for money. Why are some women starting business and others go after men?

**Read for methodology:**


Keely : Many feminist theories (Dc Behavior, Butler) that say economic independence is the (sole) requirement for emancipation, for gender relations to become more equal.

When we went to give plastic bag with gift to GVH, she asked whether we wanted the bag back

**SEPTEMBER 10**

Went to the dimba this morning. Just to see + maybe buy some tomatoes and masamba from
people working at their fields there. Were escorted by the 15 yr old Dorica girl who stopped and wants to get married. Quite a distance (20 - 30 minute) through field mainly (maize & nandolo). At dimba soil suddenly black and humid : banana trees, fields of tomatoes, maize, nandolo, pumpkin and "Chinese (green leaves growing from earth). Man digging in a well (may be making it deeper). But no one in the fields from whom we could buy. are usually there in morning and afternoon. Have to water their crops, but only about once every two day. This is also where the Musitafa sisters go to buy their merchandise.

0447 After walking back to Mudzi B girl brought us to her sister who has a tomato field at the dimba, and sells in the village at 10MK per hip. Was playing bawo [board game] next to her hips of tomatoes.

0448 Asked girl who accompanied us whether she had already found a man to marry. Three had proposed, from other villages, came to her house (without gift) to ask her, but she told each of then she didn’t want them, Couldn’t describe to me what kind of man she is looking for, when asked she said she would prefer one of about her own age than older, but boys of 15 usually not ready for marriage while girls do. Said she refused them because she didn’t like them, but also because she reconsiders going back to school (or says this because Gertrude pushes her that its better to finish at least primary school, do some ganyu to buy soap do wash school clothes)

0449 Eveles passed by, brought some eggs, tomatoes and a mango - for me to try, didn’t know it I liked.... Gertrude excused herself : pots on fire. Then agogo left again, saying we should eat but not worry about her, she is fasting. Is going to visit a pregnant lady in Mudzi B and on her way back will pass by again. May be them I can ask her about the small black stripes that she has carried in on her temples, (and for chitchat whether the woman she visited is relative). Is middle of the day, sun at its highest, and then walks all the way over here, slowly...

**Sept 11**

0450 Ganyu has bad reputation - “ sign of desperation, “ keeps poor from working their fields and thus perpetuates hunger. But running (daily) business also means women cannot work own field, because busy selling But: some can afford to have ganyu labor to cultivate their field, or some work early morning hours before going to sell. (ganyu workers can do this too though ...)

**Sept 12**

0453 Market day in [nearest tradingcenter] (5 km distance from Mudzi A). Many clothes, “ software “ (torch, batteries, knives, scissors, little locks, brush, mirror etc), veggies, chips, bike parts, chigayo. Ook ‘inside’ market – small shops in corridors: lotion, mandasi, Chigumu, matemba, beans, potatoes, cooking oil in small bags.

- Remarkable answers interviews market women:

0455 Question to BS women : Do you know microcredit orgs? Why not borrowed to enlarge BS? One woman activity remarked that she knew several microcredit orgs (MADEF, Concern Universal! FINCA)!, had gone there to inquire, but decided not to loan, because “ have to pay each week, and I’m not sure I could right away in the first week, and if you don’t, they may take away your business. “ - After marrying husband found out she was his second wife, by now has a `big zitenje BS (had small silver
Several other (Smaller : Veggie) BS women remarked that difference between them and not BS rural women is that these can easily resort to prostitution to find thing they need.

One (older) woman told us she had been married to 6 men, who all impregnated her and them other left or were sent away by her because they were lazy. And each time again she hoped this one. would be different. Despite independent income (masamba) wanted to be married, as she saw her neighbours were, exchanging gifts, husbands buying clothes for his wife, working together on the field... [and as she got more children, des te higher the need for a supporting husband]

Another older woman was temporarily selling for her two divorced single - mother daughter- one of whom had been impregnated after divorcing by a man who had quickly left her (“ ran away for his responsibilities”). Yes, they would like to get married again, are still young ! Why I asked, if they have an income - whats the advantage of being married ? Hmm yes, by now they have come to realize that it may be better to stay alone : marrying will only disturb them - leave them with extra months to feed..

Most of the interviewed women (total 8) simply got their start up capital through other doing ganyu or selling maize or cotton. Nothing extraordinary about them; equally low education like other rural women interviewed. Are proud to be able to buy their daily needs like soap, salt, ndiwo. Part of them started after divorce rather than divorce results of getting an independent income

While some BS women can now hire ganyu workers to cultivate their fields / help them on field, others still have to do ganyu to feed family / keep BS running (even within some merchandise eg veggies which seems low at BS hierarchy)

Thus so far, what is it that makes women want to marry if not for financial support : to be respected , to follow conventional female behavior, not to risk being potrayed or perceived as potitate, as threat to several cohesits / equilibrium /order

Several women answered defensively that their independent income did not change their relationship with their husband - No! Still staying ok together. None of the women I asked this question said it had changed anything in their relationship with their husband. May be wrong question / badly formulated ? Interesting nonetheless that they feel that it should not change their relationship..

Why do men propose / want to get married ? [JEneti was proposed by man wanted to find new home before divorcing his wife with whom he quarreled a lot. Did not want to have to go back to stay with parents.] Do they just pretend at that time they are interested / looking for serious relationship or simply get bored quickly after having been together with one woman ? Why do some of them spend HH money on beer? Why are some “ lazy ?” Divorce : oa no kids (husband Rosemary, Jeneti, Emra)
Why is soap so important, nr one (or at times of njala may be ur 2) of items for which cash is needed? Shamefull to walk around in dirty clothes?

Try to record whether HHs in Mudzi A sell / exchange HH items (radio, bike, blanket pots ed, or livestock) during coming months to get maize (+ soap). What do they eat when they have no maize? (Cassava flour) ? zikhawo? - no one has mentioned this as survival strategy !

Do HHs who did ganyu last season have lower yields than with same size field others? Do own fields indeed suffer from ganyu?

“Hunger season,” does not mean I will be going hungry too while in village during this time: more people trying to sell food! Trying to find some money, e.g. masamba & tomatoes from the dambo, Chicken eggs, groundnuts

Sept 13

Beside the road bundles of grass and bamboo poles are sold: this is the time to put a new roof, before the rains start - brings business for others.

In Thukwi a grass structure: Orphan Care school + milk feeding program. Another grass structure: tree nursery initiated by Total Land Care

Malita gave birth to a health son one week ago in hospital, called him Davie.

Dayson’s brother Jerard has left his wife and 2 children for another woman with 9 kids. He wanted more children but his now ex -wife was operated so couldn’t become pregnant anymore.. Dayson and his son Anderson now ran his Tea Room.

When women have period in village, use piece of cloth which they either wash or throw in pit latrine after use. On condom instruction is also indicated that the condoms should be thrown in pit latrine after use.

Comments Siambi on first update f! (+ foto’s by interviews...)

Was impressed. Said he had told Moyo about the update, and how there were many interesting issues that also are of relevance to their work. He assumed that the insights on women wanting to marry men (even though they may have independent income - which Isaac rightly suggested can still be small and therefore not necessarily makes women completely independent from male economic support) because of peer pressure from other women - those married and fearing the competition of a single woman. Had to laugh hard when I told him about woman explaining that although she had her own income through kachasu brewing, She still wanted a husband to build a house for her cant do that herself. Haha, a good reason for marrying, haha ! (sarcastically). Mentioned how this is all of importance in the light of my health / AIDS research.. People say / expect that these HH list are frauded, but now you really found evidence! Anecdotical! but still!

Sept 22
Gertrude kept track of some relatively big events, but talking to her I find there is much more in her head. By seeing Saibi working on the field when she passed going to church. (so works on field before going of to sell veggies). When passing Aisha’s house Aisha asked her where she was going: looking for tomatoes. Then Aisha asked a man from a nearby structure that is going to be her new house to come with tomatoes and fish! Ex-husband returned? Nev husband? Secret money? I had indeed seen iron sheets inside her house when interviewing --> Ex-husband paying to build it, doesn’t want to been seen as bad man.

SEPT 23 NOTES

Today meeting under the big tree in Mudzi B for registration for fertilizer compons. row of chairs in middle (Mr Chikombo, GVH, chief Mudzi A, some other men - one standing, reading out loud), next to them the female chiefs, then a group of men and besides a bigger group of women (+kids). Speaker was saying how one village with app 30 HHs will get only 15 coupons (“Ohh” want through crowd). Mudzi B village with 60 something HHs will get 29. Mudzi A didn’t hear, will ask. Then all chiefs had together their people and start registering them.

Eveles came again, bringing mango’s and eggs. Pretending to be angry about me having send my husband away again, that I am jealous because my husband wants to marry her. A white man who farmed for her... She had also brought eggs and mango’s earlier for Gertrude. Feeling sorry for her not eating them herself or giving to Kids decided to give some money. Not paying, not calculating price, but just give her something and say “ to buy some soap or salt “ But she saw through it, it now fill like an exchange, she said doesn’t want this again. Then said she would be happy with some salt, because here the groceries only sell at 10mk, small quantities. Only in Balaka sell affordable big, but cant go there easily. Hands for eyes, laughing, ashamed to be begging. Didn’t like her picture, looks like a man, even as if she had beard, didn’t like clothes, told me she had wanted to change at that time! made new picture now happier.

Last year Mudzi A chief+ wife and her son in adjacent house did not receive fertilizer coupons IGvh decided who should get them.. There seems to be quite some animosity between them.. GVH complained to people that we had interviewed wife of chief “ though she not were from that village.”/here.” Wife of chief, at her turn, came to say to I that GVH is not unrolled in FIDP activities, so should not have been interviewed / brid about them in interview.

Less people come to chat, says Gertrude, others who said they wanted to learn how to knit now say they are too busy. On field or making bricks to make new or stronger house before rains start. Gertrude heard people from other village passing by to attend funeral of young boy in Mudzi B say: “if they (me & I) would come to us, we would say we didn’t harvest anything.” Indeed, interviewing both granddaughter and grandmother in same HH (Ganizani showed that either one of them is lying about whether or not to receive support from a relative in town, the nr of blankets they have and nr of fertilizer bags they applied. Gertrude heard people passing who had been registering in [small crossroads market], saying that this year each coupons is meant for 2 HHs. In past all HHs received a small bag of fertilizer for free. At least than everybody got some, also the very poor who now cannot afford 800mk for subsidizes fertilizer (but may have sold at time of reception to buy food?)

Wouldn’t want to miss the actual distribution of fertilizer compons, nor the buzzing of activities after
the first rains, MASAF project..

Mfumu [chief] Mudzi B 65 - 26; Mudzi A 76 - 31; Chagwa 36 -15; Kambaula 74 -30; Juma 78 - 19; [tiny crossroads market] 72-29 (nr of inhabitants - nr of coupons)

After registering passing by people on mat say those not enrolled in FIDP had difficulties registering - “lazy.” Benefit of participating thus easier registration for other projects / hand outs.

Tailoring training in LL 6 months: 1000mk / month. Machine + 12 - 15000 MK

Jane, friend of Doris came to chat in afternoon with Gertrude. Told Gertrude that Doris told her she is now doing ganyu in order to run away to relative in Blantyre. Hamra is elder sister to Ester’s deceased mother, advised Doris to go to police to report people who called her a prostitute.

NOTES SEPT 24

Wife of owner of this house left to her mothers while husband still in SA - left nice, big, iron sheets roofed house. According to Jane (who told Gertrude) because the GVH (mother in-law of this woman) spoke with another wife of her husband. As soon as the woman heard this, she went to the GVH’s house and started quarrelling, even beating the GVH. According to GVH, however, there was indeed a fight, but she sent the wife away because she was sleeping with other men. [November; woman now pregnant from other man. But man has also other woman waiting for him where he can go to when he returns. Has countless children, said Jane, with numerous women]

It is now really getting hot

With first woman we spoke today (Madalitso), I got impression that she was pretending to be worse off than in reality. At start of next interviews stressed harder that this research is only for understanding, Not to inform an upcoming project. Therefore brought small gifts to compensate for time, because there will be no other benefit. First woman said e.g. that she had absolutely no other source of income than ganyu, and said that husband drinks all his money, never helps HH- but when I kept asking why she still fed him, she said he does contribute bits, he helped build their house, helped pay for a her grass roof recently. That she did not apply fertilizer, had not received a coupon, only harvested 1 bag of maize, can’t take care of granddaughter who lives with her. - Then why doesn’t mother take granddaughter back? Ah, the child is used to staying with me.

Gertrude said this morning that she found that the GVH has plenty of land (people tell her, or she seen the GVH on some land working or collecting firewood, and then GVH says it is hers). Definitely more than the 2 acres she claimed to have..

Interviewed several women whose husband works in South Africa, all seem to do well. Are in regular contact with him, he sends money and items (such as cell phone and even television! Are not lacking food anymore.. One departing husband decided that his wife’s brother should move in with wife. Sends money and sometimes also tells her what to use it for (eg bed for children). One woman had gone to SA.

One woman, Jeneti, was proposed by a man who was married in Ulongwe but quarreled a lot with that wife. Wanted to find a new “home,” before divorcing so that he didn’t have to move back to
... parents. She agreed because she needed help to take care of her and her child. Initially took well care of her, but later even took some of her maize under the pretext of having to work on mother’s field; but gave it to another woman! Divorced him and now bought herself 20 iron sheets. Just needs to wait for next year to get the money needed for putting it on roof (tree, nails transport, laborers). Is alone now, but does hire ganyu - harvests a lot of maize. Would have enough till next harvest if she wouldn’t have to sell every now and then for ndiwo, or school fees for her daughter in form 1 (temporary last husband did supply for her, but did not help to pay school fees). Another woman, Tumanene, decided to marry an unknown man who proposal her to relieve her parents from taking care of her: “Had to buy soap for many people.” Although village of potential new husband was not far, she did not go around asking about his behavior before agreeing; “Villages too far apart, difficult.” & “People can cheat you, saying he is not a good man, boy because they don’t want you to marry him…

Salika stayed in Limbe for some time and said difference was that in town people drink tea in the morning, while here in village they don’t - lack of money. This same woman has worked several years in a HH in Area 97, Lilongwe. She definitely prefers to live in the village though, because (as Elba in Guatemala) : in town everything needs money : firewood, ndiwo, maize, land for rent.. Same woman attended a seminar to learn how to teach the blind to find money for her husband to travel to South Africa, haha. Two women today said they haven’t grown cotton for a while / never because didn’t see benefit, prices decreased. Now however they heard that the price will increase from 70 MK /kg to 100mk /kg. Salika will start this yr now that kids are big enough to help her, couldn’t manage alone..

Most people we have interviewed in Mudzi B now participate in the tree - growing project even though they don’t see or don’t get benefit now. Continue because there might be a benefit or even handout in the future., don’t want to miss that! One woman yesterday, Rosemary, participates both in the tree nursery and the adult school project (already received notebook, pen, pencil & gum, for free!) because some people speculated that those participating may get free maize handouts [Already a car had come with watering cans for use at the nursery, so… (Elube)]. She doesn’t think that’s true, but just in case, does participates.. (In a way it makes sense, considering how Julia said after coming back from registering for fertilizer subsidy yesterday that people who were not enrolled in FIDP had difficulties enrolling because they were perceived “/ said to be lazy).

First four houses we went to this morning empty: people had gone to field (Sept 24)...

Blessings told us about a “CBO” [community based organization] where she got herself registered. Doesn’t know the activities yet, organized by people from Balaka who promised they would come back to explain but haven’t come yet.

Who is that man that often comes with chief?? grandson to chief.

Saw a a chitenje with computers on one of women who come to chat yesterday.

One women yesterday, Jasmine was proposed to via parents at 7 yrs old. Parents agreed, waited till 12 to really get married (she cried and tried to run away). First child however wasn’t born till 5 yrs later (trad med to get pregnant)… After child birth husband couldn’t sleep with her for some time and found another women to sleep with. He would leave during day, be back at night. One
morning she followed him and saw him with other woman. warned ankkoswe after which the man stopped, after six months of affair.. left woman pregnant, but baby died. Parents agreed because he wasn't moving around, and families were already related through grandmother. BS : Jasmine sells zigumu at Balaka market app once a week. Profit 200 MK, if she sells all (Balaka big market so that does happen sometimes, left overs she takes back to grandchildren). She saw the problems in their HH, husband didn't work so decided to start BS in 1970. Also buys pumpkin leaves at the damba and sells in vlg. husband runs little shop in front of house (simple 1 shelve on sticks). Gives her money when HH needs. husband works in field a lot - next to our house. She doing ganyu now, will also start hiring ganyu this year, because their bodies are growing old, hurting. [Jasmine] Used Concern Universal loan to buy fertilizer and zigumu BS, has finished paying back the loan. But difficult to pay back, at least MADEF easier: payback after 2-3 months, while Concern after 2 weeks...Says she only harvested 5 bags of maize, because was difficult, already finished (but Gertrude heard her say in mid Oct to daughter Innocent later: when we finish eating the maize we harvested, we'll buy ufa at Balaka). Had received 24000Mk last July for cotton, bought bicycle to go to hospital and chigayo. Didn't mention being part of the pig group with Kima in interview... Participated in FIDP goats, mushroom, manure - but in Nov told to stop, people of group say she can't participate in their vlg Mudzi A. But was initially included by Mr Chikombo.

Livia had only one dress to go to school in, was difficult to wash (would be naked then) decided therefore it was better to marry. Parents refused for a yr though, saying she should continue school. But man [22, first marriage] kept on proposing and she wanted to continue seeing each other, but not sleeping together, she says, because her parents were against their union, and she stayed with her (protective) brother in Balaka (selling diesel, took her in to take care, she helped his wife in HH) - didn't want to get pregnant. After marriage moved to Nkhata Bay (he sold handicrafts to tourists) where they had good life because husband earned money for soap and food. But quarreled a lot, he beat her e.g. when baby urinated on his trousers, she went back to home village sometimes but always returned to husband later, until he told to sell their child (1yr &8months at that time), then she ran away and never returned. When husband came to get her back, he found her pregnant from other man from [nearest tradingcenter]. She had quickly agreed to marry this man hoping it would be a better marriage with somebody from a nearby village instead of Balaka town. Found it difficult to take care of her child alone. Soon, however, she heard he was already married to someone else. He left her even before she gave birth to their child, but does come to see child. He is still young, she excuses him, he cannot manage to take care of 2 families. Sometimes goes there to begg support. BS, recently started selling mandasi [snack] in other village (brings there and comes back 3 days later to pick up money. Profit 200/300mk for 3 days. Nonetheless, eating only once a day (cooking twice for child) - last season didn’t work on land sufficiently because party in Nkhata Bay with husband,..

Elube was left by first husband two days after childbirth.. Had to wait for 2 yrs for next proposal Accepted because “ was begging her mother for soap, wanted to marry to find soap on her own “ However, he only plays cards. Spends his money there, whatever he earns through ganyu, and when he wins gives about 10mk to wife for salt, rest buys matemba [dried fish] for herself. Was advised by parents to stay with him : maybe he will change.. He has several zibwenzi [girlfriends]. She told him to go back to his home village because she is afraid of matenda [diseases/AIDS]. But he refuses, says he stopped having zibwenzi, but still comes home late. Because his mother died there would be no one else to feed him, wife feels chisoni [sorry/pity] and continues to feed him. He doesn’t help on the field, she spends more time doing ganyu than work on own field, therefore cant manage to grow cotton, and couldn’t buy fertilizer, using all ganyu.
money just for food. Eating only once these days child twice). (eat twice when buy maize after
ganyu, till they have little left again). Her next door married son seems to have been doing good (my
first impression from well to do family..) - had bed, bike radio and even phone before marriage to 17
yrs old girl.

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| Rosemary currently married to 5th husband. First husband at 16 (he proposed via mother, but R
refused because too young. When mother fell ill, man said that there would be no one to take care of
her if mother would die, then accepted), 4 yrs marriage, 3 kids, but very lazy, didn’t even buy her
clothes or chitenje (which made her child drop of her back, after which she sent him away. Stayed
alone for only 1 month till next proposal, which she accepted because she wanted to live together
(didn’t know him nor inquire about his behaviour "because difficult to find out where he lived to ask",
just started living together, went to ankhoswe and had ndowa ceremony for 3 days, 2 kids together).
Again lazy man, not working in the field, she even made the shelter at field herself... When he refused
to carry some water for her to wash her body after having worked hard meanwhile being ill ["It is not
showing respect to ask this from me!"]], she decided to leave him (reported his behavior to chief who
gave penalty of buying her & kids clothes. A month later, 3th husband proposed, her brothers had
seen him work in the field and therefore advised her to marry him. Stayed together for 6 yrs until man
died: “amalima” [he farmed], meaning: he was good one ... Fourth husband 7yrs, but no kids
so he married someone else when she wanted to leave because of headaches which started when her
brother wanted to sleep with her following advice of a sing’anga [witchdoctor] to become rich
(wanted to buy a car). She noticed that when she was staying with another brother in Mudzi B
headaches became less, hence wanted to move here. At Mudzi B was proposed by the Mudzi A chief,
which resulted in his wife Hamra being angry with Rosemary - therefore accepted the one other
proposal she got, from a man she had seen drinking. To at least become respected again. Since she and Hamra are on speaking terms again. Stays in small house with 9 people ! Kids don’t go to school because of lack of clothes (last yr were sent back from school because had no uniform). [Rosemary:] very small field (begs food from son (builder, works hard in field, last yr gave 3 bags, this yr 1 only) and brother), not big enough to also grow cotton. husband
spends ganyu money on beer [but has cotton field]!.

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| Livia came to learn crocheting a poncho (brought own thread, left over from something (simple
trouser) for baby) when she was called – a boy came with phone - by the father of her last child !
Even though in interview she said he had left her to go back to wife, never came to see baby, never
helps her. 6 heard her say “ we’ll meet tomorrow.” [Sept 25 : Gertrude asks about tel conversation
with father of last child. Livia explains she has been flashing him to ask for his assistance . He now
called back and they agreed to meet in [nearest trading center] today, where he stays. Today
however she decided to send a letter in instead of going herself, Jane was going there anyway, so
could drop the letter asking for assistance.] Other girls joked that we will see her [Livia] get pregnant
again in cotton season : “ Have you forgotten that during cotton selling season farmers have a lot of
money and can chat on you that they’ll marry you and then when money finishes go back to wife ??
“ - her baby indeed born in march = 9 months after cotton selling ...

- In Feb/March / April / more babys born ??
Discrepancies: Interviewed mother- & daughter-in-law who eat together, farmed on mother-in-law’s last season. MIL said she had no problems on field, DIL says that because of heavy rainfall they had to replant seeds twice! MIL says they harvested only 3 bags of maize of which 1.5 are still left, DIL says they harvested ⅔ *nkhokwe* [maize granary] of which 3 bags are still left.

Most participants of the tree-planting concern in Mudzi B projects see the benefits in getting tree handouts which they can grow to get firewood or building material! or can sell for these purposes. Very few say the benefit to them is increasing soil fertility (Chisoni, Mudzi B + Suset, Mudzi A). Many say they participate because the GVH told them to, so leaders role is indeed of great importance.

Kondwani (35, left) said she just followed the example of others.

Not all people change their eating during hunger season. Some eat less often or prepare less nsima (or phala = less ufa in same amount of water) others continue eating as usual. After having done some ganyu and found money and brought maize - eat more often (But not necessarily “as usual”), until it almost finishes again.

Amila (36 married) last yr only did ganyu in Aug & Sept (clearing land, mailing ridges) after which she quickly started on her own field so that her kids could eat green maize asap. husband meanwhile continued doing ganyu.

Kondwani (35 -left) agreed with first proposal she received, at 19 yrs old, because all her friends were married, she was ashamed not to be married yet, Waited eagerly for proposal!

Two HHs will have to share I coupon, which is for 2 bags of fertilizer - different types. Heard some say that they mix the 2 types and each HH takes 1 bag of mixed fertilizer.

Bit by bit I start to understand the quick acceptance of man’s proposal by many women. Salika (the chief of Mudzi B) said she agreed at very same moment that man told her he wanted *banja* [marriage/family] with her because “when a man proposes, it means he is seriously ready to take care of you “ [See also Belita: Was happy / relieved when man proposed to her after first divorce. Made it sound as if he did her great favour, community himself to her, willing to support her long terms.] (4 yrs later however, he married someone else, stopped helping her so she decided to end the marriage). Next man same story, left her for someone else, Now she doesn’t want to get married anymore because “it just brings more problems,” = children to take care of...

Several old women they moved from further south to Balaka “because their children kept dying.”..

Thandizo (59, divorced) said she married (at app 15 yrs) because she was afraid to get pregnant from an unserious man, better to get married. her husband To be worked somewhere and brought her sugar and biscuits during courtship. Adult granddaughter (Tinenenji) had to laugh about both comments. When he left her after bearing kids, she managed because she worked hard on the field and taught her children to work her field too.
NOTES SEPT 26

Found out that the volunteering teachers at the Concern adult school do get some remuneration - unlike what Victoria said: 1000mk/month. But their responsibility includes watching over the tree nursery. Said Venesi who teaches herself just like Victoria. She also said that she receives loans from Concern Universal, since 2006. But doesn’t consider this a “project” - which may explain why some other participating women didn’t mention this during our interview. Jasmine told us she sells zigumu, but ever since 1970. Amila explicitly said she has no independent income - Venesi said all of the 5 other women who received loans with her are still in business. Also said that the micro credit project was also initiated in Mudzi A, 10 people got loans (anyone can get loan as long as they are with 9 others -), but some men just used the money to buy beer, couldn’t repay led to quarreling and so the project there ended...

Venesi (36 2nd marriage) wants to divorce her husband because she finds him lazy. He doesn’t want to do ganyu, says it is better to cultivate a larger own field than do ganyu on other field. But she finds it necessary to bring in money in times of need and went to the ankhooswe to complain. Tomorrow they will meet to finalize, have already met with wife and husband. Husband first refused, she then said: “But I told you many times to go and do ganyu, but you don’t change!” He them accepted, has never done ganyu ever since they married in 1992, would be difficult for him to change - she says: Venesi says that she would also have divorced him if she didn’t make any money through the tomato BS that she started with Concern money and the money she earns as volunteer teacher at the concern school. If she wouldn’t have had those incomes, she could have done ganyu. Is not part of the reason why she decided to divorce him now. Is only because he is lazy, doesn’t do ganyu. Better to be alone than having to take care of him. [Venesi] Keeps taking new loans over which she has to repay with interest of almost 25% rather than using the profits of earlier business because she finds it difficult/impossible to gather/keep lump sums: somebody gets ill or something like that... Valentine and husband give some of the money they get through selling cotton to her grandmother to save it for them at the time of buying fertilizer + hiring ganyu. Thus: need for saving possibilities...

More reasons mentioned for participatory in the tree nursery project: Molly Mudzi B (chubby girl, 2nd marriage) heard that after this project Concern universal will come to give loans. And “kusilira” desire, wanting to do the same as others / to admire / to be envious. Valentine (24, first marriage) is one of few who does not participate in the tree project, saying she is not interested: project never last long; come promise & go

Younger sister next door Emra (22, 1st marriage) has a field at the dimba - but hasn’t cultivated it during last months (winter cropping) - because goats can destroy the yield, she says - Who else have dambo fields? - Tinenenji (sister of Dorica), Lovely (husband in SA), Venesi Concern micro credit, Amila (seems very poor, mad husband), Salika (chief Mudzi B),

Extra columns in Excel: FHH / MHH - reason for participating in projects

I find it annoying, even offending that some women lie to me - but its just relevant info that they do...

Same woman says she & banja some times go days without food, but do have a bike they could sell:
“But bike can take them to places where they can find ganyu whenever they can't find nearby while selling only provide them with food a short period.”

Several women today said their husband decided about expenditure because he is the *akulu* in the house, which Gertrude translates as the elder one (which indeed they are).

Valentine was selected by the mother of her husband when she looked for a suitable life for her son (because of her good behavior - ‘respecting elders,’ Same as Amila) Edina then demanded to see him first, and at first sight accepted him (“allowed” is literal translation from Chichewa) : Blood can be the same, she explained, which makes people feel attracted to each other. She don’t ask him any questions, because he could cheat her anyway, have to live together to see real behavior.

I suddenly realized last night that few of the interviewed said she had given birth to a child before being married, no signs of sex without being properly proposal and married (but: daughter of Rashida, daughter of cassava BS woman at [small crossroads market], Livia). But today interviewed 2: Grace (22, 1st marriage. Says she was cheated by her boyfriend, who said he would marry her, slept together, got pregnant, but he refused to go to the chief to officially inform him/her about marrying this girl. She got afraid, because people say that if you stay together without having gone to (paid) the chief, no one will take care of you if partner dies. It also made her suspect that he may have been married elsewhere, and she decided to end their relationship. Molly in Mudzi B (27, 2nd married) got pregnant while still at primary school, in standard 7 (at 21 yrs), boyfriend was at nearby secondary school in form 3. She stopped her school, went to stay with mother while he finished his secondary education. After finishing form 4, however, he married someone else.

Reason for not being happy with husband marrying other wives : have to share resources (says Dora + Salika).

Watch out for: Esther Paulo, Teleza Uleya & Mira Mubsa - have loans from Concern Universal ! Many people had chicken but died because of some disease -

Woman who visits more often, with big eyes (will interview her tomorrow, of Tunga family) = Pamela) is enrolled in adult school even though she can already read & write. - because had heard that those enrolled will later be getting loans (but first need to be able to read & write to properly run business). Teachers told those who can already read & write to use left hand, so that when Concern people come to check, will not notice skills. Indeed quite some women who went up to st 6,7,8 in primary school say they’re participating in Adult School project, for “remembering / not forgetting loading to knowledge -,” but maybe in reality not to be excluded for loans, if they are only saying to me they are participating, for same reason.

Phingi came to ask Gertrude If rumours were correct on saying that I Went to Lilongwe to arrange maize handouts after hearing how low peoples yields here were. Gertrude denied, Phingi said she just wanted to be sure [people say I am cheating them, can't believe that I would stay here so long without leading to a project]- since I had told her daughter they can come to me with all their questions (after I asked them a lot of questions during interview). Then she said that people have
just eat too much after harvest big full plates was then complaining about the sudden influx of goats after FIDP distribution, destroying all the crops (indeed several women complained about this in interview). Gertrude suggested they discuss to tie their goats to trees for example. May be people will do that now, Phingi said, as there is a visitor who will otherwise report on them / bad impact of handing out goats - my presence may thus have quite some consequences, changing peoples behavior, calculating the results it can have. Already Phingi has been chased out of the FIDP group when I came and just wanted to speak to Mudzi A people because of FIDP (or maybe they thought I came to check on FIDP execution). At the day we arrived there had been a gathering of people to welcome us / hear what we came to do. Phingi had send her daughter Livia there to hear what it was all about, but she was chased away - (May be the GVH taking me over there & them taking me they both participated too was planned as such, secretly informing me about this). As said, it feels uncomfortable that I am played with like this and that people continue to calculate/adjust their behavior / answers to increase their chances of benefitting from anything I could bring them. But I should just see it as it as interesting and relevant data. Hoping that at least part of it will become more clear / find out truth throughout time, by staying here a long time

Women at mat were talking about a certain man who had come to Mudzi B last cotton selling season to find a wife. Told the daughter-in-law of GVH that he had so much cotton that he was going to buy 100 bags of maize to later sell - she told Gertrude. Didn’t trust his story, too good to be true, so refused. He then went on to propose to a woman in M. village who accepted: But instead of bringing her maize and BS, he is now very ill and she is taking care of him

Jasmine tells Gertrude today on mat outside our house that she was among the first in the pig - club that Kima showed us. --> Didn’t mention this interview. Also told Gertrude that she had harvested 3 bags of nandolo of which she sold 2,5. In interview Jasmine said that they had finished their maize already in Aug (while she said they harvested 5 bags) - Now Gertrude heard her say to daughter that they should buy ufa at Balaka when they finish eating the maize they harvested.

NOTES 27 Sept

High death rates make that people inherit (some older women said they got most of that they owned as inheritance from deceased children, one woman today said they got their bike her brother - the owner of the bike - died)

Dorica (girl that walked us to the dambo) wants to get married, but refused several proposals, Hence not necessarily all proposal are gratefully accepted. But she probably has an OK home/provider (mother), thus not desperate for assistance. And may have a romantic idea of marriage, wants one she is attracted to. Just like Valentine who first wanted to see the man, only see him before agreeing, and said that “blood was the same; therefore attracted to him.

Two women said (today Pamela + one of previous days) that when you are single / have your own income you can buy what you want or need at that very same time, while if you have to beg your husband for it (kupempha) it will take some time before you get it.

Gertrude finds it very strange that people who have sold cotton & received lump sum of money do not own
a blanket. According to her one of the first items to buy if you don’t have any. So may be lying...

Ada (doesn’t know whether she should consider herself married or not husband left last month without saying anything and didn’t come back - before delivery of baby) got pregnant very soon after starting a zibwenzi relationship with her husband, because they only dated for 1 month and she says she got pregnant during relationship = before marriage...

What is exactly difference between ‘zibwenzi’ and marriage relationship? Ankhoswe? informing chief? --> living together

Thokozani just gave birth to her second baby, married since 2005. During our interview her husband comes out of the bafa, gets inside the house to dress smartly (jeans, shirts, shoes, cap, phone hanging from neck) and gets on bike. You’re leaving, asks Thokozani. Yes, will be back Sunday afternoon going to Mangochi ... Thokozani looks very sad, aangeslagen.” Please don’t forget to visit my uncle there ... “ I heard her say. “I’ll come back with money to buy trees” for the roof on their new house, he said.

[But is else wise good husband, says Gertrude --> provides...]

NOTES SEPT 28

Met Hamra on our way may back from distributing pictures in Mudzi A 11, and told her I’d like to take a picture of her with husband. No, she said plainly, and continued walking. Chief was standing next to us, we had just greeted him, he was on his way to get some,leaves to cure a wound. We then sat down with her under the next mango tree to give her picture, and I asked her why she was mad, why she didn’t want to be photographed together with husband. She spoke softly, but her suppressed anger was obvious. That one, looking ferociously at husband, works his field, harvested 4,5 bag, sold it and now eats my harvest. Doesn’t provide anything for me. Even my blanket was brought to me by my son ! I work my field alone, do ganyu alone, and he just eats it. We cultivated cotton together and sold it for 4000 MK, which he took. She didn’t see one tambala of it. (What did he spent the money on?) Doesn’t know (is not a drinker, but Rosemary told us he had proposed to her, so possibly spends it on women ...) (Why do you choose to stay with him, why don’t you divorce?) the ankhoswe have been informed..

Two other women who find their husband lazy, said, eventually after me probing for a while, why they stay with a man they clearly see as a burden rather than help, that they WILL leave him - Venesi said after some probing (repeating question, summarizing her answers, putting question differently to understand why they stay with such a man) that the ankhoswe are meeting tomorrow, that she is actually about to leave him – Let’s see what happens... [divorced indeed]. Josephine also fiercely complaining about husband using HH money to drink beer, she taking care of everything alone, explicitly saying it’s better to stay alone when asked about an advantage of staying with this husband rather than being single first said it would be difficult to find another husband who is willing to take care of all her kids. Then said she wouldn’t accept any proposal because afraid of same behavior, then said she will leave him. (Why not done yet?) Already started cultivating now, can’t leave now... Plus needs money to go to somewhere else, start up new life. Even says she already made up her mind about going where: Chilipa, Mangochi, as there is a lot of land there.

 Went to give picture to GVH, and tell her I’d leave today, come back Wednesday. She said that I
should get all the HH necessities that I was told are lacking here in LL. Told her I am not allowed to do that, have to try and understand what life/struggles/decisions are like here, if I interfere I change that and can’t find out. Her daughter was still with her, although she said she was to leave yesterday. Then said she wanted to be "registered" - interviewed, included on whatever possible project will lead from this. I told her we are out of gifts, which is as good as true (2 salt + soap left, and 4 more HHs to interview in Mudzi B, and want mother of Victoria as check on Victoria’s answers as I found that she lied about her remuneration for volunteering as teacher at the Concern Adult school: said there was absolutely no payment for her does it to help her village while Venesi told us they get 1000 MK/month... 

Okt 1

Many comments while we walk around after lunch to distribute the pictures and ask some of the questions we missed: too hot! Working very hard! Not afraid of sun! Just arrived today yet already meeting up with people, despite sun! Indeed nobody doing hard labor these hours, nobody in field

Malita (62, divorced) will be able to continue eating as usual, finds all her money through Orphan/Care support - 3000 MK/month because 2 grandsons. After 10 yrs alone after first divorce (she decided, all her 8 kids had died, sing’anga said husband had bewitched them) friend came to inform her about man searching for wife.

Gertrude was right guessing that GVH ‘s daughter had shown up from Balaka just to be “registered.” Came to complain/get sympathy : Rent of her house has been raised from 2000 to 3000 MK/month, please register me, came all the way after mother told her to. Fine, said Gertrude, but there is no benefit. Daughter then said she’d come in the afternoon but never showed up. [nov 6: she [Sofia] was chased out by GVH, even though she only needed shelter! husband married other wife and told her to work his field at Mudzi B (brother of Innocent). She has 4 kids, and husband has 2 other wives with kids].

Alida also asked again today whether we would come with help as there have been discussions. She had said that at day 1 I made clear that it was merely research, no handouts or project would follow. But the many questions I ask everywhere made people doubt that. Probably can’t think of another reason for asking all these questions. Assured her again no project ... When I was in Lilongwe, Gertrude went to funeral and was also asked whether its true that I’ll come with maize, as I asked the nr of people staying in each HH.

Mosque makes people write examination each year to write/read Arabic, who passes gets a gift. Fifty buckets have been sent to mosque. People complain, other yrs there were bikes, clothes. This yr are suddenly told they have to pay small amount (200mk). Again handouts thus, but tied/on certain conditions.

One cannot accept gifts from a man without getting into difficulties if you decline him later. He will get angry, say that he has been waisting his time, demand pay pack. E.g. Ellesi was told by mother not to accept any gift that her admirer would give her because she was not sure yet whether she wanted to continue school or not - Would have caused big problems if she had accepted gifts and later told she couldn’t marry because back to school - they would not have been able to pay back ... Most girls
didn’t give anything to boyfriend but, e.g., asked him what he likes to eat + cook for him (Teleza, Sofia), put water in the *bafa* for him when he came, if he asks for water -went on knees when giving (Florence Musitafa). (Anderson also wanted 2nd wife, but Malita did not agree, She always is respected to him, he provides).

Sweetness (35, 2nd marriage) started mandasi BS after she choose to divorce her husband who was drinking beer.

After proposal to marry + allowance some don’t marry right away : to find out about his behavior e.g., or because he first wants to prepare = find enough money (e.g. Mwayi, Rebecca).

Some are coupled by relatives. E.g. chatting with girl who then mentions she has a brother who is looking for a wife (e.g. Christina).

Christina (34, 3th marriage) says her husband bought 2 extra fertilizer coupons from GVH Mudzi B!

Rebecca (18, married) & husband bought maize at low price just after they sold their cotton to add to their own harvest of 7 bags - clever!

Teleza (28, divorced) explained that when a man proposes to marry, it means he is financially ready for it.

Nelia (20) explained that some women accept to stay with lazy/beer drinking/beating men because they are poor, cant divorce. And many women take the risks of marrying such a husband (thus not fist taking time to ask around about his behavior) to avoid that he propose to someone else.” Changu)“ - hurry, take this opportunity, this offer before someone else will ! Some, she and aunt and cousin said, are afraid to marry such a husband and prefer to run their own little BS to find what they want.

Number of people changing / changed eating habits: smaller portions twice a day rather than reducing number of meals (no breakfast, lunch small (less nsima/phala), diner normally/less nsima). Faith (27, married) will not start eating less until mango’s are ripe to fill stomach with.

Livia came chat with Gertrude & crochet poncho : said they will finish maize half Oct, because they haven’t been selling cheaply just after harvest (When people have money to buy whatever incl maize because sold cotton) as many others do: "We sell for low prices, completely forgotten the *njala* [hunger] that we just went through..." The father of her [Livia’s] last child had promised her he’d pay for ganyu on her field, she hired people for clearing (900mk) and ridging (600mk). Job is finished now, so she asked him for the money, but he says he doesnt have now, so she told the people to wait for their payment.

Saibi still sees the father of last child, but contrary to first interview now say she wants him to stop visiting her. He comes 1-2 x per month, bringing money and *ndiwo* [relish] sometimes, not always. Stays for four hours, doesn’t stay overnight, back to first wife. She told him to stay away now, but he refuses, telling her she had known this arrangement from the beginning and agreed. Strange all.... Why does she not want him to come anymore now (First interview she said she’d like to marry him, because “*amalima*” [he farms])? Why had she agreed with arrangement to start with ? (Wanted *banja*, she said - but why not waiting for proposal from unmarried man ? What are disadvantages of
current situation? What are advantage of being pa banja [married]?

Teleza after I asked why she wasn’t running a clothing BS like her mother did (and then had nice house built, so apparently good BS) : no capital. Concern Universal loan? But max 5000 and pay back each two weeks. MADEF is better, back each month, first payback after. in these village circumstances is difficult to sell enough in 2 weeks to be able to pay back enough that soon. Thus, too make it more effective: Later first payback / smaller ; larger amounts ? (but I think bigger loans possible after first successful paid of loan); Saving opportunities.

Oct 2

Paid rent to GVH who said she had spoken to owner of this house in SA, who had said that 1000 MK was too little, she should increase to 2000mk. I emphasized again that there will be no project following this research. People know she [GVH] said, don’t worry. some people even hypothesized I came to steal blood.

Yesterday when giving his picture to chief Mudzi A he was sitting on his mkeka [sleeping mat], sewing his trouser.

Gave 200mk yesterday to mother of Charity as condolence. Gertrude says other usually give 10 - 20 MK, some even only 1.

Rebecca (18, 1st marriage) does not participate in the adult school project (nor trees) “ because she already knows how to read & write.“ husband has clothes + fish BS, they have nice iron sheet house [but not theirs! from Esnart with husband in SA]...

Jasmine says she wants me to bring / start a loan project for women to start gain, big BS.

Amila (very poor woman) has bold circle of callosity on top of head - maybe from carrying so much water ? Also daughter of Mery.

Malita (62, 2x divorced) lost daughter today who lived in Blantyre and worked in bottlestore, Had been fine up to now [at least, no message had reached here about disease, being ill], people don’t know what happened, maybe she was killed by a drunken customers last night. Arrival of body supposed to be today , but it is supposedly still in Blantyre because problems finding transport.

NOV 4 2008 Tuesday

Now ... how to proceed ?. Does increased independent income for women lead to safer sexual behavior? Why can/do some women get increased independent income while others don’t ? More enquiry into sexual behavior, e.g. condom use, e.g. at health clinics ? But enumerators passed through villages one day asking questions about HIV /AIDS that were considered inappropriate by some women, says Gertrude - which org, results, who were question, how did they feel about that?? --> Ada was one of the women interviewed. I asked (while knitting outside and discussing what had happened in village during my absence) what they had asked her. Whether she uses condom, has gone for test, how often she has slept with her boyfriend. On second one she asked back to interviewed : Have YOU been tested ?? To which she got no answer. To the next question she answered that she slept only once with boyfriend, bodza [lie/nonsense] - she said to us. Bridge project, Gertrude thinks. (Bridge for kit) People complained about the type of questions (“you cannot
go around asking people such questions! “”) + no gift while I had given them soap + why them (not everybody was interviewed, only some) what do I have to do with it?” association - stigma.

Pamela & Ada (young girl, just gave birth, husband left for other wife) were here knitting, Pamela received coupon, Ada not (wasn’t enlisted) but mother who she is staying with has. Livia not, although she was registered, but her mother received 2 end will give her one.

Accompanied women to tree planting work shop organized by Concern Universal . "learned a lot today”, says Pamela : why it is important to grow trees, why they should not be cut down, a lot! Today was first day of 3 day workshop.

Yesterday coupons were distributed at [small crossroads market] to inhabitants of 5 villages and Mudzi A + Mudzi B. Everybody that was enlisted received. Were called one by one, signed by inked thumb. Gertrude says that today at borehole wife of chief Mudzi A said to other woman that although she didn’t receive a coupon she will work hard and apply manure. But others said the chief did receive ....?? Said it cannot be that chief did not receive! [but wife & husband different parties, own fields]. As per Friday ADMARC will open to sell fertilizer to those who have already managed to gather enough money, even though planting hasn’t started yet - but the wind has, so rains will probably come soon. --> Accompany woman buying fertilizer with coupon at [nearest tradingcenter] .Some do ganyu, other received money from SA, others told goats MASAF.

I asked Pamela + Ada what happened in village while I was gone. A lot, says Pamela. The divorce, she then mentioned first. Is the current talk of the day. Ainessi (daughter of Rosemary) ’s husband found in bed with Emra (who’s 6yr old son dropped dead last month) by ex-husband of Emra - who had left her not long before because he wanted a wife that gives him children that stay alive. But came back one night, found those two red -handed and got so angry that he slashed his wife’s head with a panga knife. Jane commented that these things are heard often in this village E.g. Pamela was caught redhanded 3 times by an ex-husband who came back to her (see Gertrude’s notes). Ainessi’s husband accompanied her to the hospital where the wound was stitched. Jane says he also proposed to have sex with her when she was taking a bath recently. He also asked Doris, who also refused. Ainessi’s mother tells Ainessi just to let husband be. Others find that mother should not advise this, means she just encourages the behavior to continue. In morning Gertrude heard Ainessi + husband fighting, but when she went to borehole in afternoon saw them sitting at mat together.

Gertrude borrowed various decorative knitted small tablecloths to imitate - she is really amazing in knitting. Copies just by seeing the complex knitwork!

Gertrude found blood on veranda one morning, but no sign of wounded animal, people say it may be witchcraft. Indeed she had bad dreams for 2 nights (somebody forcing her to eat a big piece of meat, and somebody beating her - was maybe a bit afraid, alone here at night). Her mother says she should just pray...

[What else happened while I was away, Pamela & Ada relate: Hyena’s have come to eat goats (which they do each year) + Received coupons, continued Pamela about what I had missed during my absence in village.

Several women have received money from their husband’s in SA. Gertrude heard one say 13000, another
20,000 MK. One woman [Tumanene] proudly showed of the cellphone she received from her husband, hanging it around her neck, telling everyone at the borehole “If you want to be reached, send your husband to SA to work.” Others just stayed quiet. Later commented that it must be a new thing to her as others just keep the phone in a pocket not showing it off like that. Fatima & husband their radio at full volume when they received money from a relative in SA, Innocent told Gertrude. But within a few days, it stopped again.

MASAF project took place beginning of October, just after I left. Took two weeks. Some say that only 20 ppl could participate, were enlisted by GVH - but I saw many work. may be from different village groups - ask Mr Ntawanga.

By now most people still have ufa [maize flour], either from own harvest or by doing ganyu, ndiwo [relish] is a problem for many says Gertrude. Not much is sold these days here. So people eat plain nsima without anything? Ah o, says Gertrude, that cannot happen. Some still have nandolo [legume], she says some people eat nandolo with dried cassava. Other may only have some tomatoes with their nsima.

When Gertrude came back to Mudzi B people said they thought she had gone off to get married somewhere (she had indeed left without informing anyone except chief + GVH so that it would take some days for people in other villages to find out house was empty.)

Gertrude answered to Bridge question why she got tested: heard stories at boarding school about men using witchcraft / medicine to sleep with you without you noticing. Pamela also told Gertrude that she had dreamt she had sex with a certain man from this village after which she went to him in real life to tell him to beware.

Jasmine asked Gertrude whether it is true that there is this disease AIDS which kills people - leading Gertrude to answer to Bridge that not many people know about edzi in this village. Gertrude asked Livia if many women here, know about pills for family planning - no even herself only heard via via about it, but doesnt use. Gertrude heard that husband of GVH has 3 or 4 wives, spending some weeks at each to be take care of last time he was ill. Gertrude has seen 3x condoms wraps on way to borehole. Pamela also told I some people here do it in bush. Many women are making zigumu these days, especially during MASAF project - Secondary income stream. Others sell in village, at [small crossroads market], at [tiny crossroads market]. Jasmine asked Gertrude: I saw some people sell bread, do you know how to make. Gertrude taught her. others asked her where she learned, but she didn’t tell, afraid that others will start making the same. people came to her house to buy, many came for this new type of food. Next time Jasmine added ufa, but didn’t turn out well, wants Gertrude to teach her again.

Grace’s husband has not come back from Mangochi ever since we interviewed her. Even though lake is closed now - she is afraid he is married there. Asked Gertrude to teach her how to make mandasi [snack]- while during interview Grace had explicitly mentioned she wanted a BS, anything but mandasi... But church meeting coming up, and she decided to sell mandasi there, many people came to buy. Next time she also added ufa - to make more, but people complained.

Last week maize finished at ADMARC, where it had been sold at low prize, as ordered by Bingu at 52 MK kg. Gertrude saw traders come in Mudzi B with 98 baskets (madengu) and later returned with a lot of maize, about 90kg. Exchanged. "Thus not such a shortage as people say it is..." concluded G.
Fatima sent by husband to learn knitting. Jane has already knitted several woolen caps and sold 2 of them for 100 MK each. I saw grandson of GVH (who may be brother of Jane, otherwise cousin) with one of those caps. GVH reprimanded Gertrude for teaching women and girls to knit without charging anything for it, "they will bring their zibwenzi [boyfriends] to steal," But Gertrude has just continued. Those women / girls also said they will just continue to come

WESNDAY NOV 5 2008

The first rain has come! In the night, not hard, but long, with thunder & lighting - but when they woke up, nothing was seen of the rain, soil had completely dried again. So they will wait a bit longer. The chief had told Gertrude earlier that he hasn’t even made ridges on his field yet, will do so when rain starts. May be too late, Gertrude answered. I know what I am doing, he replied.

Went to [nearby] primary school (mission school) to attend day 2 of 3 days seminar on tree planting. Organized by Concern Universal, carried out by government forest extension worker based at [nearest tradingcenter] . Was first, according to extension worker while some participants had told us same seminar was held last year. Teleza explained explained on way back that last year it was about the whole set up. Committees of 10 people from each village. The committee members could join this year’s seminar so as to be able to teach their fellow villagers about planting trees/ forestry. Last year received 2000mk for seminar, say some, while this year nothing. When Gertrude asked grandson of GVH (who came to put plastic + grass on toilet roof) if he has going to attend the workshop - said he stopped because they aren’t paying. All participants did receive a Fanta and bread roll though (yesterday too). Seminar from 8 -12 am. First half about making a tree seedling bed (outside demonstration seemed quite well followed although some women sat down during demo, so were unable to see + some other chatting going on in back, oa chief. Back in class [let's go back, dzuwa [sun] complained some women) extension worker pasted paper sheets on black board on which he had written about the importance of trees, a table to keep track of your seedling cultivating activities etc). Little less than half the group was dully coping all his writings in the notebooks they had received for this purpose yesterday. I had looked into Pamela’s note book on our way to the seminar. Saw arbitrary lists of words (one including ‘scorpion’ and ‘snake’) without mention what the list was about. When I asked she said they by then hadn’t yet come to understand what is was all about. Gertrude copied in small school notebook extension workers sheet + explanations of demo. She said it will help her improve her vegetable garden, even though it was about trees.

Second half was about HIV and Edzi. Group was divided into 6 groups, and each got 1 question to answer about HIV & Edzi (what is it; how does it spread (incl cultural traditions); how can we know whether a person has HIV; why is testing important for your health; how can we take care of a person suffering from AIDS?). It didn’t take long for the groups to come back with perfectly correct answers, almost literally ("HIV ndi kachirombo kamene kayambitse matenda a Edzi") from promoting materials. After each group presented their answers they could choose how they would be applauded for, and of the groups came up with original ways : ulule, clap& stamp, wave etc. Childish, but effective to fresh the mind. Gertrude commented to me during the seminar that these were at least better questions than those of the Bride enumerators. But during our group discussion about question what AIDS is some said: Thin person, whether child or old. Anyone can see, even a child can know when somebody has AIDS: thin, coughing (See Gertrude’s yellow exercise book for more details…)
At the end of the seminar the Concern Universal field worker apologized to me that he had been too busy to talk to me earlier. Name is Langmwale, tel: 040976XX. Told me about their upcoming project called REFLECT, aiming to empower women. The women themselves should think of the kind of assistance they want, and then Concern Universal will bring their in contact with potential donors. My thoughts exactly! Curious to find out where this will lead to .... Won’t start for another 4/5 months though [exactly when I plan not to be here]. But Langmwale will bring me some project documents tomorrow. So women were right to believe that the adult school would lead to next steps.

Walking home I asked Jasmine whether she had learned anything new today, which she immediately denied. Started to list: Chiwerewere [adultry], you ’ll get AIDS. helping someone giving birth in village with wound yourself, you can get AIDS.

When I asked Ada & Pamela yesterday about what has happened in vlg during absence I also asked whether her husband had come back. No she said, and kept quiet. Then Pamela started answering for her, saying that he is married somewhere else, and that his other wife also just gave birth.

During seminar break Pamela told Gertrude that the head master of the [nearby primary] school proposed to marry girls, and if they refuse, transfers then to other schools. Jane had told Gertrude he also proposed to her, now that she wants to go back to school she’II be going to [small crossroads market] ipv [nearby primary school]. may be he won’t allow her back says Gertrude. Dorica also said she will not be going back to [nearby primary school] but [small crossroads market], Gertrude does not know why but may be same reason.

After all the stories about women leaving or sending away their husband after which they survive through ” working hard in their field,” ganyu or start BS --> no independent income that facilitated them divorcing.

THURSDAY NOV 6

Jasmine complained to Gertrude: Is it good that they say they will be teaching us about tree, and then they start talking about HIV/AIDS ? Was ashamed ask this when I was around ... Some people (Teleza) yesterday assumed we would be presenting something as well at seminar.

Went for pictures and follow up questions. Talked to Alma, old woman 60 in Mudzi B 11, next to white washed house.(which is from her daughter who married driver in Blantyre) who had 3 failed marriages when she was young : The first husband she chased away after several months because he beat her after he had drunk beer ; Second one (the chief of Mudzi B to whom she came to report about first divorce) had already 2 other wives but he said he would divorce them (she told me, while earlier she had told Gertrude that she had no problem being third wife because he was providing everything equal (eg soap, salt, clothes, ndiwo) and that later the other 2 decided to divorce him instead of other way around). This second husband died. Then third one proposed, she accepted and waited 2 months for him to find enough money, meanwhile he did not provide anything. Promising that later they would be working on the field together. She admitted that it can be a bad sign when a man does not provide during courtship, although it can also be his habit tradition / depends on where he comes from. They indeed worked together on the field, but he later left her taking all their cotton
money ... After this many men proposed (incl this last one again) but she refused them all, fearing to find the same behavior, Has been alone for a long time, about 20 yrs, and is doing perfectly fine, has never missed a husband. Lived in the house the second husband had built her until it collapsed, then her son built current house. She once had an angry woman entering her house, asking who the owner of the bike in her house was. She later heard that the husband of this woman had disappeared and since Alma was single, she suspected he might have gone there. “Men bring problems, disturb you,” she says. She works very hard in the field (+ has son who is teacher and helps her and daughter married to driver in Blantyre who probably helps her too when in need.) and says she does better than some married couples who don’t even have salt. When I want to prepare a meal with oil, I buy oil. When I want to drink *thobwa* [maize drink], I drink *thobwa* ...

Also talked to Lizzie (19, first marriage) who’s husband went for SA 1 month after they got married. When she married him she knew he would be leaving for SA. It was a plus, actually ;she says; a husband with an income ! Livia has also been proposed by a man who is about to leave for SA (via Elube’s husband, who looked a husband for his grandson - see Gertrude’s notes), but as far as I knows, has not accepted. Why?? Gertrude thinks men want to get married even if they are about to move to SA so as to have place to get back to (and to invest in?). Livia went to hospital in Balaka yesterday to get birth control injection, she told Gertrude - but couldn’t really explain why. Says she does not want to get back with ex-husband, who wants to get back with her, but as second wife, she doesn’t want that. He tried to seduce her when they went to her field together to cut a tree for firewood - she refused, she says. Lizzie said that South African women are after Malawian immigrants because they are hard workers and have money. Livia says that the man who wants to marry her and then go to SA is married to someone else, wants to divorce her, but still ... And that he has only seen a picture of when she was still young and fat, May be he doesn’t even know she has been married and has children (which surely he does ,or at least his grandfather who asked her for him)

Also talked to Mery, who we could not give picture to earlier because she had been in hospital for a long time (delivery baby, received 3 drips of blood, then after birth blood from nose, could not breast feed baby - bewitched, say people). Explained about get-together with husband that during their 9 months of courtship she had demanded he gave her something because she was afraid to get pregnant, as proof to her parents that he would be providing, that it was really his child. He gave her a watch with ganyu money. And married her after 9 months of money collection for kitchen tools etc- as planned. He proposed to her because he was in standard [class/grade] 8 and could not continue education because lack of school fees.

People often mix the two fertilizer varieties here, says Gertrude. While they know that they should apply them at separate stages. *Ulesi* [laziness]...

About MASAF : indeed, all interviewees said they did not participate, because they were not registered. In fact, said Victoria, no one from Mudzi B 11 was registered. Only GVH's own relatives.

On path from our house to the *njiko* [pump], just near, in front of houses of Ainessi & Rosemary several condom wraps. Gertrude has seen those there for 3x already. So they are being used ...

At borehole women commented to Gertrude about her small vegetable garden that “here nobody grows
vegetables near their house, didn’t know it was possible, people here are lazy ...

0615  Plant improved **nandolo** [legume] varieties from ICRISAT?? Also as ‘excuse’ for being here? So that people may think that I here for more agriculture-oriented research?

0616  Are the reason of old women for marrying + proposing different from younger women? Check Excell sheet...

0617  Many women’s BSs seem temporary enterprises. Bv Elube started **zigumu** [snack] few days ago. Grace made **mandasi** several times. Jasmine sometimes makes **zigumu**, recently learnt to make bread from Gertrude, traded potatoes last month.

0618  Jane told grandfather about husband of Ainessi proposing to her while bathing, threatening to beat her later for refusing. Decided to tell grandfather because grandmother (GVH) had only responded by saying: Forgive him. Jane was scared he may one day really beat her. Grandfather said all this behavior (incl being found in bed / at mat with Emra) cannot be accepted, he must be chased from village. So GVH went there with chief Mudzi B + Chief Mudzi A (+ Sunglassed glandson) as witnesses to meet with the man ... [This morning Gertrude went to fetch water and check on what had happened: man is indeed chased from village. But he says he isn’t worried because he knows Emra will follow him when she comes back from Lilongwe where her sister Valentine is now. Thus: to be cont’d again ... It is said that younger sister of Ainessi, Mphatso, also slept with Ainessi’s husband before they moved to Mudzi B. Gertrude says that she thought this man was a good husband, always staying quiet at home ...] To be continued.

0619  When knitting, Modesta was asked about the boy she was seeing. She said she stopped, because her mother is paying her school fees (Form 1) and doesn’t want to cheat her. She wants to continue her studies and become a nurse. others responded,” We will see you not become a nurse, somebody will cheat you,” (= make to marry him / get pregnant). While knitting (big group today) Ada started singing “you told everyone at the borehole that you are going to buy fertilizer because your husband sent money from SA.” Chisoni - who had indeed done this, left shortly after this happened. People were complaining “Does she think we don’t have money for it??” - said Gertrude.

0620  FRIDAY NOV 7

0621  Must really also delve into reasons of men for proposing + leaving **banja** .... !!! interviewing ? Gifts?

0622  Impossible, but would be very informing to understand the exact reasons of Emra to sleep with husband of Ainessi. Desperate for new supporter after own husband left her several days before ? Simply flattered by his attention? Has liked him for quite a while ? Revenge for something ? It is gossiped that they have been in relationship some time already ...

0623  Went to Sofia (granddaughter of GVH staying at Jasmine compound) for interview. Tried voice recorder for first time seemed to go fine (although her baby overcried first part of it..). To question why she grows local maize, Sofia answered: **Zimene amapanga anthu ena, ifenso timapanga zomwezo** [That’s what other people do, so we do it too].

0624  Continued to house of Thandizo to interview her daughter who provides the HH income. But
daughter is off to [nearest tradingcenter] to buy fertilizer. While I expected few people to be going these first days after it has come available because it would be very busy, long long queuing. Must ask her about this tomorrow. Then asked Hilda the question I had not been able to ask before: why she chooses to stay with beer drinking lazy husband. Says she tells him to go, but he refuses.” Where can I go, I stayed with you so many years …” Also about condom wraps we have seen laying around: boys in the village use them. Then the smaller boys use them to make balls.

Walking home passed by chief Mudzi B and sister Kondwani, sitting on mat under big tree with kids. I asked them whether they received coupon (yes) and when they planned to buy fertilizer: Ndalama... [money...]. How do you plan to find money then? We were just discussing the same issue: ganyu. Did you Participate in MASAF? No, say both, don’t know why this yr only few people could participate. When we walk away Gertrude tells me that chief Mudzi B had told her that she wasn't going to use all her MASAF money for fertilizer and wants Gertrude to knit hat and shoes for her daughter...

Gvh went to Balaka today to get groundnut training from ICRISAT! Together with 8 other people from Mudzi A. Mr Chikombo has received the seeds that will later be divided amongst the Clubs. Which people from Mudzi A? Why these, who selected these? Wish I had known, then I could have joined the training...

Innocent and Lizzie came to knit (Lizzie brought bucket full of water), Rashida and old Chenawe came by. Innocent and Lizzie said that indeed husband of Ainessi has been sent away, back to home village. girls agree with this because he was disrespectful after being caught, saying that he was not afraid of what the chief or GVH could do to him, will do as he pleases.. And Emra will also be sent away once she comes back from Lilongwe, quiet unfair I’d say

Innocent told about Kima selling 4 of the pigs of the pig club to a vendor. Agreed to 14000mk, thinking that would be per piece, but vendor gave it for all ... other club members very angry. Girls laughed about story,” and that is supposed to be the treasurer!” Quite a disaster actually, strange that Innocent laughs about. Also her own mother had expected to get 12000mk. club does this every year - to buy fertilizer, and maize. Instead of 12000, they have to share this amount ...

Gertrude tells me story of her book, saying author writes that it is not based on truth, but she thinks it must be, must have happened to someone he knows.

Gertrude says : Can’t happen that husband of Ainessi had come to Emra for first time and at same night have sex. So may be relationship was going on longer. We have also seen husband of Ainessi at Emra’s compound often chatting. Also when we went to interview her.” Ainessi is also not in village, so maybe they left together after all.. Emra is expected back this weekend. husband (crazy when moon) of woman with callosity on head was sweeping her compound. When Gertrude asked what he was doing, he said he is related to her (preparing for her return).
the AEDC and DADO. This is the fifth week that I am staying in Mudzi B, and I adjusted my plans to only stay until March (when the first crops can be harvested) to staying until June. I changed this because through the interviews I conducted I found that cotton selling season is also a relevant period for my study.

As I mentioned to you when I was selecting a research site, my aim is to better understand the causes and consequences of differences in wealth status of women farmers. More particularly, I want to understand why some women manage to be better off while others remain impoverished; and what the impacts are of increased independent income for women on gender relations. I wanted to stay in a village where an agricultural development project is being undertaken so as to include the impact of such a project on differences in wealth status. I selected the Farm Income Diversification Program as this program focuses most specifically on increasing incomes.

Once my research assistant and I settled into our new home in Mudzi B village and we explained the villagers what we came to do (and thanked them for their hospitality), we started visiting each HH of the adjacent village Mudzi A (which is a FIDP target village). In each HH we interviewed one or several women, asking general demographic questions (name, age, marital status, nr of children, educational level etc) and questions related to food security, agriculture and income. This gave me the opportunity to get to know each HH, and gave the village women the opportunity to get to know Gertrude and me.

One of the main problems we encountered was that people had difficulties understanding or believing that this study would not lead to a development project - even though I have tried to make this very clear from the beginning. This belief must have influenced some of the answers that women gave us, as we found several women hided certain information or lied about some issues. The advantage of staying here for an extended period of time is that this gives us the opportunity to not only have one-time interviews, but slowly get to know everybody better, have numerous chats and see for ourselves what goes on. As such we have been able to rectify at least part of the missing/wrong data.

After having interviewed women from each HH in Mudzi A, I got the impression that FIDP did not have the substantial impact on increasing incomes as I had initially hoped. However, several women told me about their small scale businesses (buying and selling tomatoes or masamba; making mandasi, zigumu or zitumbuwa etc), after which I decided to delve more into these businesses (reasons for starting, profits, impacts etc). For this I went to both [small crossroads market] and [nearest tradingcenter] on market days to interview women sellers. I furthermore decided to include also the HHs of Mudzi B village into my study, so as to compare between a FIDP and a non-FIDP community, and simply to expand my number of informants. As our house is in Mudzi B anyway, we are generally more in contact with women from Mudzi B than from Mudzi A.

My plans for the coming months are still vague, as anthropologist I need to “go with the flow.” I intend to be in and around Mudzi B the coming weeks, until the beginning of December. I will return end of January and stay until half of March. Then I return again half April - this time with my supervisor from the university, and stay until end of May or half June.
Reasons for getting into relationship:

1. Mavuto: help/assistance
2. Build house (Belita)
3. Stop gossiping, to be respected (Chikondi, Rosemary)
4. Age to get married, waiting for proposal, just staying, ashamed not to be married
5. Want to live together, be couple, help each other (Rosemary, market woman with 6
6. Pushed/advised by relatives taking care (Rosemary
7. Blood the same/attracted (Valentine
8. Better married than pregnant by unserious lover/than have multiple boyfriends --> (Belita, Thandizo)

Reasons for divorce:

- He marries other woman, disappears or she doesn’t want to share resources
- Husband not providing, lazy, beer drinking, abusive (Rosemary
- Went to work somewhere else and never sends anything (Elube

Reasons for staying together while unhappy:

- Love him (Meriam)
- He has no one else to go to, chisoni (Madalitso, Elube)
- Not respected, prostitute, bargirl, gossip (Josephine, Meriam
- Invested/worked on field, first wait for harvest (Josephine
- He contributes, eg building house, new roof (Madalitso
- To have example/guider for sons (GVH)
- Difficult to find new husband who will take care of kids from other man (Josephine
- Poverty (speculates Nelia about other women)

Reasons for staying alone:

- Afraid of same male misbehavior
- Men only lead to more problems = more mouths to feed (Market woman cassava, chief Mudzi B, Alma)
- Managing fine without husband, can do as she likes now (Alma, Teleza?)

Nov 8

Thandizo looks scaringly skinny, has the hollow eyes that Brington [our gardener in Lilongwe] also had. Last month when we interviewed her, she also had sores on her face.

Rosemary’s husband has not been around her house for some days now, says Gertrude. S told Gertrude earlier that she thinks he may be having another wife.
Gertrude passed by Mr Chikombo’s house to hand over the report I wrote, asked him about MASAF: first stage “public,” only for limited nr of people, second stage “project” will follow soon, many can participate.. Indeed to help people buy fertilizer. ICRISAT had instructed him to only select 6 people from Mudzi A who’s field is near the road. GVH just joined by herself, now ICRISAT said 2 will have to go.

Rosemary’s brother = chief Mudzi B ex-husband

Lizzie + Jasmine (who’s mother lives near M. village) told Gertrude about Charles Msako’s plans to start bar at M., looking now for girls to work there. Jasmine went to apply for job, but was sent away, they want young girls ...

Jasmine says she was one of the people who stood up against GVH when VDC asked people to report misbehavior of their leaders. She said:” Is it good when handouts come leaders bring over relatives from other villages to receive? “ Even GVH's brother stood up, saying he was indeed sometimes brought in from his village to Mudzi B by GVH to benefit from projects / assistance. People clapped when all this was said. GVH herself was not there. Many people are afraid to speak up against her. But all know about her misbehavior, also in the surrounding villages. One person once went to GVH to complain about something he felt was unfair (not receiving coupon or so) but she sent him away, saying he was not originally from this village anyway, had no right of speaking. When Jasmine had just moved here she shared her thobwa [maize drink] with the GVH, when she slaughtered a chicken, would bring her half of it. But people soon told her she shouldn’t expect anything back for it because GVH isn’t like that. Doesn’t share. But gets angry when somebody else in village has a nice chitenje, or eats nice food. Want everything for herself.

Jasmine says she doesn’t want to come here too often, because people will say she is begging food from us

When the grandson of GVH passed by one day during the MASAF period he said to the knitting women that his girlfriend started begging him money for kanyenya [snack] now (see Gertrude’s notes) one of the woman then responded by saying “The problem nowadays with you boys is that you want something in exchange for gifts, you want to sleep with girlfriends.”

Jane said to Gertrude that Pamela always came here in beautiful clothes when she was married at ZOMBA. Meaning he maintaining her well / provided / was a good husband. Jane told Gertrude the story of Pamela at borehole shortly after Ainessi’s husband had been found sleeping with Emra by her husband. Jane said: This is second time we hear this story in our village. Earlier Pamela was caught redhanded having sex/ sleeping with man working at [nearest tradingcenter] hospital when her husband from Zomba (where she had been sent away because having sex younger brother of husband - says Jane; Pamela says because husband was sleeping with other women in their own house ; may both be true) came and saw them. Then he decided to divorce and take their two children. Later same happened again. Pamela slept with man from M. village when the one from [nearest tradingcenter] also came by ...

Follow up questions to Belita (who’s daughter recently died in Blantyre, bargirl). Belita had told Gertrude during interview that she has no BS. As she is 62, I asked her today whether she never had any BS. Said no. The when I asked why, she started to tell that she brews beer (masese)
for sale, only not now because of traditional instructions related to funeral of her daughter. First
waiting for ceremony just like Charity who can’t go to church until ceremony. Says her mother told
her to start in dream after she died. After questions I asked her whether she thinks the rains will
come today, considering all the clouds. Says she doesn’t know, but hopes because people are getting
more and more difficulties, especially finding ndiwo [relish]. When the rains fall, therere (okra) will
spontaneously grow everywhere, which can be used for ndiwo

GVH says we can cultivate the small plot between our house and the road. Gertrude wants to plant
potatoes, peas, maize. I would like to plant ICRISAT nandolo.

Of whom Gertrude knows that they worked on the recent MASAF project: grandson of GVH, chief
Mudzi B, Hilda, GVH + chief Mudzi A did side jobs (bringing water to workers & protecting tools) and
received something for this too

Continued from Janneke’s notebook II

Nov 9, 2009

Those few who participated in the MASAF road clearing project (stage 1 - if Mr Chikombo is right)
have not received their payment yet. Also Amila joined. She had offered Gertrude earlier to collect
firewood for her, but Gertrude said that she can do that herself. Now Gertrude went to ask her husband
to help her cut a heavy trunk. Husband not around, but wife will do it. “Then you can help me because
I don’t have salt.”

Livia says she took a birth control injection without really knowing what it’s for, just following
Fatima, who takes them too and told her about it. Livia thought it was for every woman who had given
birth. Only later did Fatima tell her what the purpose is... She [Livia] thought of marrying the man
who wants to go to SA, son of Elube, but now doubts because he also has children, will be difficult for
her to take care of all those children incl her own. Better first take care of own kids before marrying
again.

Amila came to help chop a trunk at Innocent’s field (the field rented by headmaster, young brother of
Mr Chikombo - rents field but cannot dispose over trees). While she chopped, Gertrude took her baby
called Mavuto (because of the shortage of food, and quarrels with other people at the time of his birth)
on her back while the two of us went to fetch smaller branches of firewood. Afterwards made bundles
and put on our heads. Gave Amila 100MK + bag of salt + empty bottle (in which Gertrude went to
bring her some water to drink) - which made her happy. She complained that she had been doing
ganyu for 2 weeks together with husband and received only 1000MK, but we really helped her now.
She [Amila] is related to Emra and told Gertrude that the story is indeed true that Ainessi and her
husband have moved to other village after he was chased and that all 3 agreed that Emra will join them
as second wife when she comes back from Lilongwe, which is supposed to be tomorrow. We will
see...

The man who does ganyu on field next to our house (GVHs field, her grandson) was working there
again this afternoon, like yesterday afternoon. Thus works on own field in morning, and in late
afternoon ganyu, Gertrude concludes.

Walking to one of Livia’s fields (has quite a lot) to get the trunk, Amila said about the field we passed
that it belonged to someone who is now away, and now taken by GVH.
For several nights in a row we hear daughter of Rosemary cry in evening around dinner time. Today Gertrude asked her at borehole why: mother gives her too little nsima, or her brother takes too much.

Nov 10, Monday

Yesterday afternoon learned how and where to fetch firewood. Just behind Livia’s field where Amila was chopping the trunk there is a field which belongs to GVH but is not being cultivated. We found quite a lot of firewood there, Gertrude speculated that other people get firewood from trees on their own fields. Bushes that had died through fire we broke of as low as possible and made bundles of these which we left on our path. Walking back we collected these bundles into one big one, laid it over 2 strings (strips of maize/fertilizer bag), did those strings around the bundles and made the wraps tighter by putting a stick and turning it around. Bundle on head and walk home, basi [ready/that’s all].

This morning got up at 4.30AM - already daylight! Made ridges on a small plot between our house and the road. Have 6 blisters now. Realized that even if we’d grow wheat, I would still not be able to make bread of it... Some ridges remain for tomorrow. Afterwards, app 7am many women at njiko [pump], all coming back from their fields.

[small crossroads market] market interviews:

[small crossroads market] is about half an hour walk from Mudzi A. We arrived early in the morning on market day Thursday but found only Siye selling cassava. Were told that most vendors and buyers come in the late afternoon.

Siye (50 yrs) is from N. [nearby village], behind Mudzi B. She tells us that the cassava BS belongs to her daughter who is now buying cassava at D. village [near river]. They do not grow cassava themselves. This daughter does most of the selling, mother sometimes comes to help. At other times they sell masamba or bananas. Every day sit beside the road at [small crossroads market] (near school, so many school children pass by) - only in rainy season they stop selling to cultivate their fields. Daughter started BS 3 years ago, when she divorced “because there was no one to help them”

“tikusowa ku banja” [we lacked things in our family], lack of money. Siye lives with app 12 people in HH: 2 divorced daughter (1 with 4, other with 3 kids) that run the BS + 2 other children of Siye. They don’t always sell enough to take care of this big HH, but her BS is the HH’s only source of income. The only impact of the BS on the family’s life is that now they can at least eat every day. Says “timasiyana!” [we are different!] when I ask about difference between BS and non-BS women. A non-BS woman goes around to find ganyu, while BS women can buy what they want, don’t need to find piece work. Siye’s HH members don’t go for ganyu, only work on their own field. After selling they buy what they want and then all together work hard on their field. Her daughters would like new husbands, because “they are still young”. But the problem is that most boys come, make pregnant and then leave. Have come to realize now that it is better not to marry again, will only disturb them. Her daughters used to be proposed, after allowing they get pregnant and then the husband runs away from his responsibilities. It’s difficult to find a good husband, eg to run BS with. One of her daughters has 2 kids from same father, then divorced, was proposed again while selling cassava. But the man left after impregnating her...

Emiyo (28) is selling tomatoes spread on an empty bag in heaps of 5. She comes from M. village just near [small crossroads market] market. She started this BS in 1995, at 15, because of “umphawi” [poverty]. At other times she also sells rice (when she has enough investment money), therere [okra] and groundnuts. Sells at [small crossroads market] everyday, 7 days a week, from 6 AM to 6 PM. Also farms: from 4-5.30. When her tomatoes finish, she goes to Luwawadzi, dambo near Balaka - about once a week. Then the selling temporarily stops. Profit of tomato BS at [small crossroads market]
varies, most profit is in Nov, Dec, Jan. With her profit she buys soap, salt, paraffin, Vaseline, pays chigayo. Edith married in 1999, first marriage. Her husband is builder. Stays in HH with him and their 2 kids. Went to school up to standard 8, benefits from this education by knowing whether she made profit or not. Own 4 blankets, small radio, 2 bikes, phone and bed. Through BS it is easier for her to get what she wants. Non-BS women have many problems, difficult to get what they want, maybe start stealing or prostitution: “hule” (mention some of the women selling next to her, selling on separate bags (cooked maize, heaps of groundnuts). Behind the line of bags with merchandise are some women with madengu [round flat baskets] with masamba [green leafs] and bananas. Thus, she continues BS even though husband has own income: WHY?

Elina (23) from M. vlg, near Mudzi B (same njiko [pump]). Sits next to Emiyo, selling maize cobs, cooked in their leaves. At other times she also sells tomatoes or masamba [green leafs]. Chose this merchandise because people like to buy these the most (maize has biggest profit). Started 4 years ago to help herself, did ganyu to find money to start with. Sells every day at [small crossroads market]. Goes to Luwawadzi 2-3 times per week to buy new merchandise, whenever it finishes. Usually buys for 400MK (or 500 when made good profit) = half a dengu. Doesn't know her profit, because after money comes in she buys the things she wants: lotion, salt, chigayo [maize mill]. Married 3 years ago, husband agrees with her sitting here all day. Stays in HH with 5 (1 kid, 2 in-laws), have no other sources of income than her BS. Farms too, and does ganyu every year (husband, sometimes Evelyn too). Left school in St7 because mother died, she stayed with relatives, no money for school. Learned that it is good to learn BS (“geni”), that it is good to be able to buy your own things. She can indeed buy her own soap and salt, “rather than being a prostitute”. BS woman can easily buy what she wants, while non-BS woman not.

Tessi (32) sells masamba [green leafs]. Comes from C. village, under same Traditional Authority as [small crossroads market]. Started her BS 6 yrs ago because of problems at home finding soap, going to chigayo etc. “Ndinasintha merchandise” [my merchandise varies]: sometimes zitumbuwa (mandasi made of ngaiwa [maize husks] & often banana) selling at school. She found the money to start her BS doing ganyu. Buys masamba at Liwawadzi 2x/week, sells on Thursday at [small crossroads market] and on Sundays at Chiyendausiku. The other days zitumbuwa at school. But masamba give bigger profit. [nearest tradingcenter] is too far from her vlg to go. Married in 1999 up till now, first marriage. Stays in HH with husband and 5 kids. Also find money through growing cotton. Cultivate hybrid maize & cotton. Farm together + ganyu workers. Before she started BS they did ganyu, now hire. Went up to St7 in school, now regrets (kudandaula) that she didn’t go further, sees no benefit. With profit buys soup, clothes for kids, ndiwo and pays for ganyu. She decides on the expenditure as she is the one who takes care of the children, she knows best what they need in HH (also before she started BS). Buys masamba at 500MK, sells at 800-1000MK = 300-500MK profit/day. Zitumbuwa profit is about 100MK/day because bananas and oil are expensive these days. Says she has good husband: sitimenya [we do not fight] + help one another (he is the one who goes to buy the masamba on his bike). Says BS did not change the relationship with her husband. “Some women here do stay in difficult relationships, ngakhale [despite] own income. Some husbands tell their wives to start a BS, but when money starts coming in they suspect her of other ways of finding money... Gives problems in the family.”

Loveness (44) from C. vlg today sells masamba [green leafs], but at other times also nyemba [beans], ntotchi [bananas], zitumbuwa [snack] (but these days it’s hard to find bananas). Started her BS in 1981, at 16, because “kusowa” → lacking clothes. Borrowed money to start. Runs this specific BS because she had no money to start another (bigger) one. Started because she wanted to buy goats and pigs. Now has 7 pigs (a lot! Can be sold for 14000-17000MK/piece), but sold all her goats again because they would not come back to khola [fold]. Walks to Luwawadzi once/week to buy masamba at 600MK, sells at [small crossroads market] only on Thursdays, other days at home, making about on
1000MK = 400MK profit/week. The profit she uses to help in the HH: chigayo [maize mill], salt soap. She is the one to decide expenditure. First marriage from 1980-1981, she decided to stop the marriage because he was sleeping elsewhere... Got married again in 1985 until now. Husband is lazy, doesn’t help in HH, she is the only one taking care of the kids, and she made the bricks for her house and the khola [goat fold]. But she pities him because he has no other relatives to go to. Tries to change him but to no avail, besides “he is a man, he knows his own responsibilities” (no need/use telling him what he knows already...). He doesn’t listen, difficult to send him away. Plus, their field belongs to him... Of their 4 acres, she cultivates 1.5-2.5. For the other part she hires people. Kills a pig to pay for ganyu. Sometimes husband also helps on the field. They grow local maize and plan to grow cotton this year. She didn’t go to school, but sees little difference between herself and people that did go to school, those do the same BS as her, don’t have employment either. Says that for non-BS women it is easier to start stealing (eg maize from husband and then sell) or prostitution (uhule).

Konda (54yrs) stays in a small hut on her field, far away. Before used to stay near Balaka at the Liwawadzi dambo, but had to move because water flooded house last year. Until then she used to sell masamba everyday, but now it’s too far. Only sells on Thursday at [small crossroads market]. Her daughter used to grow masamba at her field, mother sold them. Now buys at Liwawadzi. Started her BS when she was still a young girl, after she sold some maize to start of. She sometimes has to do ganyu to keeps the BS running. Started because “kuvutika” [having problems]. On question whether the BS changed her life, she answers: Bola [Ah well/At least/Better], although I was married, I could at least buy my own chitenje. Now that she lives on her field, it is easier for her to farm (before lived far from her field and her knee after hurts...). Grows local maize (can’t afford hybrid), has only 2 bags left now. First married in 1972 at 18, after 1 child he married another, however. In total Konda was married 6 times and had 6 children, all from different husbands. Some left by themselves, others she sent away, the one she married in 1985 came back to ask her for marriage again, but she refuses because he never bought her anything when they were together, not even clothes. She married again and again even though she has own income because “was very young, wanted to be married. Each time hoped this one would be different especially farming together. Saw other families helping each other, by buying clothes for their wives, exchanging gifts, she hoped for this too.... Usually buys for 250mk and sells for 550mk. Today she bought for 700mk, to try - profit from last week, also from selling tomatoes at home. With profit she buys soap, chigayo [maize mill], matemba [dried fish] - but it’s not enough. Went up to std5 in school. In HH now 5, herself with 4 kids, the other 2 got married. None of her children works, her BS is the only source of income. One finished secondary school (school fees paid with BS, daughter herself cultivated the masamba), but difficult to find a job. Does do ganyu together with her kids. Benefit of BS: can get what she wants, although it’s not enough. It’s just good to do only one thing, but farming - can eat but not get soap etc need money too, but BS.

Jimesi (46yrs) lives at [small crossroads market] (goes home to eat lunch every day, others who live far buy bananas etc). Currently sells tomatoes (before usipa & masamba but too expensive these days, too little profit). Started 3yrs ago because of “mavuto” [problems] like hospital costs, soap, njala. Before used to do ganyu to find money, sold maize after harvest to start her BS, goes to Liwawadzi ¼ x per month depending on sales. Gets a full small dengu [round flat basket] at 700mk, selling at about 1200mk = 500mk profit per month. Difficult to keep tomatoes for so long time, break easily. With profit buys soap, salt, food. Has to take care of 7 school going kids (and 2 orphaned grandchildren) who need pens, soap etc. She is the one who decides on expenditure because her husband wouldn’t know about the needs of their children. Sells every day at [small crossroads market] (unless she is ill or when attending a funeral). Farms before going to [small crossroads market].

First marriage in 1975 at 13, had 1 child after which her husband went to visit his parents in Dedza and
wrote her a letter that she could find another man…  Second marriage in 1976 until now.  Stays in HH with husband and 7 kids (of whom 2 are orphaned grandchildren). Income sources are BS (alone no help) + ganyu (she + kids, husband is too old now, he only farms a bit on their own field + orphan care money for 1 child. Left school in std 2 because the teacher beat her. Now wants to go back to learn how to write and read the bible. Also for BS to have a bigger one needs to be to write inorder to calculate whether you make profit or not. Now her BS is still small enough for her to manage calculating. Says that the BS did not change her life: money still goes to soap etc, nothing else, nothing she can show (off with). “Did not change relationship with husband, also before BS, she decided on expenditure. Why continue?  When stopping and just staying, won’t even be able to buy soap. Would have to beg, now at least not begging. “Don’t forget us and our problems when you go back to your country”

Patricia (36yrs) from [nearest tradingcenter] came around noon on 2 bikes with husband. Together they hang zitenje over a structure made of sticks. She says BS is her own, but the next day we saw the same BS at [nearest tradingcenter] but only her husband selling. In 1996 started selling mandasi and zitumbuwa, selling at various market days. Heard from friends about the profit of chitenje BS and used her mandasi/zitumbuwa profit to buy 20 zitenje in 2004. Buys at Limbe and Lilongwe about 2x per month. In Lilongwe better quality, from Tanzania (shop owner goes to Tanzania himself), buys about 40/50 zitenje depending on the money she brought. Spending app 14000 -10000 incl transport. In Limbe usually spends about 10.000mk. Buys at 750 for a pair, sells for 900. Sells at [small crossroads market], [nearest tradingcenter], Kachenga and Chilipa (takes 4 hrs of travel by bike, sometimes hire a car). Sells 8-10/day [zitenje], cotton season 15-18. Got last marriage in 1997 untill now, husband found her selling mandasi, she is second wife - didn’t know he was already married. They farm maize together, but cash crops + BS she does herself, doesn’t want to share.

With her profit she bought goats, pays for ganyu, and school fees, buys food. She decides on expenditure because she knows best what is needed. Farms cotton + mtedza [groundnuts] for sale, and chimanga [maize] for food. Has 1 acre and rent 2 or 3 (for many yrs already, 7 or 10) [thus already wealthy before zitenje BS]. In past it was difficult to find what she needs, now she can buy everything she needs. Why does she choose to stay with [polygamous] husband? Married woman are more respected, without husband people may think she does prostitution to help her BS, now they can think it is husband who helps start/run BS. Wears small silver waist match.

Only went up to std3, because lacking money. Patricia asks us whether we are from an organization that gives out loans? No, would she want a loan? Ah she knows where to get a loan, went to FINCA, Concern Universal, MADEF to inquire about loan. But one has to pay back each week and she isn’t sure whether she could manage, then they may take away her whole BS. Why did she manage to grow while others don’t? Doesn’t know why others don’t, but for herself, she is good in calculating, whether she makes profit or not, how much to reinvest and how much she can use for other purposes. [it’s clear that she finds vegetable sellers lowest in BS hierarchy, the least developed.]

At [small crossroads market] 10:30am: Women selling bananas, mtedza [groundnuts], cooked chimanga [maize], tomato, masamba [green leafs], cassava, zitumbuwa [snack]. Girl selling thobwa [maize drink] for grandmother or aunt. Several men selling second hand clothes, and another new clothes. Before noon woman arrived running restaurant (grass walls), buying her ingredients at market. One man on bike buys a big, enlarged dengu full of masamba, may be to sell elsewhere. Women keep watering their merchandise to keep it from drying, and have an empty bag or banana leaves to cover. Most people are said to come in the afternoon. And it’s busier at [small crossroads market] in cotton selling season, May, June, July. Then people sell and buy cotton here.
November 10

2 x 85 MK = 1kg flour
2 x 10 MK = yeast
2 x 20 MK = sugar
200 MK = salt

95 breads at 10mk = 250mk profit.

--> Ingredients for Jasmine’s bread. Husband went to Balaka and bought. She already agreed with 3 grocery shops in surrounding villages of related owners that she can sell bread to them. Wants to learn now, and then buy a big bag of flour and make many.

Jasmine told me (while Gertrude was teaching how to make bread dough - Jasmine happy that through my coming here she had now learned to make something that others can’t make, everybody is making zitumbuwa [snack], but don’t know how to make bread!). that people went to [small crossroads market] today to receive money from orphan care.

Innocent and Sofia, all dressed up with shoes and head scarf, left early this morning to go to hospital with sick children.


Traditional medicine: Jasmine was cutting slices of a wooden stick into a big cooking pot - making a traditional cure for a woman who had been taking pills from the hospital (birth control pills) and now was pregnant but continued bleeding monthly. Jasmine learned about traditional curing when she herself was ill and didn’t get better. A traditional doctor from other vg helped her, cured her, and then taught her about traditional medicine.

While Gertrude and I were knitting outside a bike taxi passed by with on she back Emra, with a bandage on her head. I didn’t notice, but Gertrude saw, and Emra waved to her.

At around 4pm the grandson of GVH who has been making ridges on her field besides our house, started working again. “ppff, dzuwa!” [sun!] Innocent commented, that someone would work in this heat.

Gertrude remembered, seeing Emra pass by, that she heard at borehole that Emra’s ex-husband already found a new wife in his home vg. Which made Gertrude conclude that he must already have been dating there longer, but I wonder if that is necessarily true.

Gertrude was tricked into babysitting somebody’s children (single woman working at MEJN) sometimes for days & night, even month in a row) in exchange for bed and food. Woman had promised to take care of her, let her go to get educated and pay for it. Until after 2,5yrs friend of this woman told Gertrude that the woman had said that she wanted to keep Gertrude like this until kids finished secondary school. Many yrs …. Gertrude told her she wanted to go and do her own BS, woman said “I remember what I promised you, don’t worry”. Tried a bit longer but eventually left to rent a telephone bureau. By now this woman is very sick. Gertrude had seen many different cars coming in and out when staying at this woman’s house.
Again up early to make ridges on our small plot (Gertrude plainly told the GVH that we have nothing to pay for it). Moon is almost full (Gertrude says people believe the weather will change when there is no moon, then the rains will start) - gives a lot of light. When I asked Gertrude if people sometimes work on their fields at night when there is much moonlight and coolness, she answered that people say that the one who works in moonlight is a witch, or at least related to witchcraft. Like the boy who was recently abducted by an old woman to work her field in the night. But maybe she speculates, if one had started doing it long time ago, people would be doing it now, since so many people just copy what others do (= an answer many people give to question like why they grow local maize, or why they participate in the tree project. And she said the same when I asked her why she ate nsima with her right hand (just do as others do- then realized she uses the other for washing these parts, pointing at arm pits).

Gertrude finished knitting a jersey yesterday which Jane has already paid for by buying 3 new balls of wool at 100 MK. Sells jersey thus for 300mk uses 2 balls of wool = 100mk profit. Others have helped knitting parts of the jersey, to practice.

On our way to grocery to interviews BS women there, passed by Eveles, who was happy to see us. Said she had dreamt of me, so knew I would be returning soon. Asked after Feye [my husband], why he left, should have come live with her to chat and work if he was so bored in Lilongwe. Oldest daughter of the son she lives with had come back from working at a shop in [small crossroads market] to be living with parents again. From now on, will be working for cotton company, buying & selling - not married. I asked Eveles why in her opinion some women start a BS while others just stay. Some are simply born lazy, she answered. Is it not in your country like that too? Some go to school while others don’t. Although this also depends on whether parents advise their children to go to school or not. Daughter in-law added that some women lack investment money to start BS. Gave us some mango’s, and Eveles accompanied us for abit, telling us she had received a condom. After a while, we understood she mean coupon. Had believed she was going to receive fertilizer when she went to [small crossroads market], but no, just a coupon, money will be difficult to find, doesn’t know where to get it. Under Bakili at least they all receive fertilizer…… Also [Eveles] told us, while showing her field full of ridges she made herself (the part where soil is too hard, will wait for rain. When rains start will first plant on part with ridges and then make ridges at other part meanwhile planting), that her second husband was always chatting too much while working on the field, telling her many stories, so he didn’t do more than 10 ridges per day. Then she would go to work on another field to make him stop delaying his work. And eventually sent him away completely. Last yr rain from 17 - 25 Oct and then stopped in Nov 7, said Eveles’s daughter in-law.

Then continued to the trading centre at [tiny crossroads market]: 3 grocery shops, a tailor, bike repair shop and a few women under a tree. At a small distance, an iron sheeted house where one can charge telephone. Gave Gertrude's phone to be charged, and interviewed her and the women under the tree. Tomorrow back to make pictures (forgot camera), pick up phone and interview the woman in one of the grocery shops.

Esther (29) lives at [tiny crossroads market], just near the grocery stores and runs BS of charging telephones. Is a bit fat and wears earrings. Iron sheet roof, charge phone batties through a car battry and invertor. Bought the battery for a television, but did not give enough power, then together thought to use this battery to charge peoples phones. husband is away from home most days (is a builder, only in evenings and at Sundays at home) so she runs the BS (and kids help out when she is out, sometimes). Started this BS last year, charges the battery at [nearest tradingcenter] where either she or her husband go by bike for 60mk can charge
about 15 phones with this at 30mk = 360mk profit per week. With the profit she buys ndiwo, soap, salt, pays the chigayo [maize mill]. She decides on expenditure because she is the one that is at home while husband is often away. Before they sometimes didn’t eat during day because she had no money to buy ndiwo. Husband’s salary is erratic, whenever they reach a certain level of the house, by foundation, window level etc. But when there is no cement e.g., takes a long time before some money comes in. Now, disadvantage of this BS is that some phones don’t charge well, and then people think they broke their phone. Has led them to consider stopping their BS, but people get used to charge their phones at her’s therefore continuing.

Married at 17 in 1996 till now = first marriage. Went to same school, he proposed chibwenzi in 1996. He was in std6, she in std4. At first she refused because she wanted to continue school. Only in 1996 did she allow, because she faced many problems, especially lacking soap. Didn’t start a BS at that time because difficult to find money to start. Has a good husband: not abusive (nkhanza), not moving around with other women.

Who charges the generator?: husband when he is around, otherwise she goes.

Besides his building job and her telephone charging BS they also cultivate peppers and cotton for sale. This year harvested 4 x 50kg of peppers and 11 bales of cotton. With money bought kitchen tools, and chairs maintained the TV etc. She + kids + ganyu workers do the farming.

The BS certainly changed her life: Akabwera anthu timatenga ndalama yomweyo ndikugulira ndiwo.[If people come, we have money with which I can go to buy relish]. Pakanapanda [if it was not - ChiLomwe] zimezemo tikanatetema [we would stay – ChiLomwe] ndi njala [with hunger]”. Husband does bring in money, but not continuously as said…

Different between BS and non-BS women is that “Iwowo amasowa kopezera ndalama” - last ones lack ways to find money, while she: “Ndimapeza zinthu zomwe ndikusowa”. [I find/can get the things that I am lacking]

Doesn’t know any organizations that give out loans/microcredits. Doesn’t remember/know/want to tell how much the battery had cost them, so husband is called in. He says they bought it on 11 October 2007 for 10.500mk at Zomba. They stay in (nice iron sheeted) house with their 5 children. Inside they have huge fluffy furniture taking up almost all the space. In a small room behind the living room they keep the battery and inverter, with a number of phones being charged.

Zilongo (18) from J. village sells mandasi only, started in January. Her father decided that she should be doing a BS because it was difficult to find what they needed in the house: soap, salt, chigayo. She then choose to make and sell mandasi, (just like a friend who taught her to make) because it needs less investment capital than other BSs. Her father borrowed money for her to start. Elsewise isn’t helped by anyone to run BS. Goes to J. village about 2 x per week to buy ingredients. Sells 3 days per week here at [tiny crossroads market]. Her friend sells here the other 3 days. The rest of the week she works on the field. Buys ingredients at 300mk, selling for 400/500mk in those 3 days = 100/200mk profit per week. Uses profit for chigayo, ndiwo, soap. Sometimes gives to her parents, sometimes buys these herself. Also uses for lotion or clothes sometimes.

Is not married, (lives with parents and 5 younger brothers and sisters. Is second born, 1st lives in Mangochi. Father works at [large commercial estate], they furthermore cultivate sorghum for sale (eat too), and when in problems, sometimes sell maize too. [BS woman at Grocery] Left school in std8, but would like to continue (to help people like me = have job like Gertrude). Wants to get married in future, but not now, not thinking about it yet. Men do propose but she answers that it is not her age yet, better wait till 30, haha. BS changed her life in sense of that now it is easier for her to get lotion or money
Paula (23) from C. village, only sells tomatoes, as decided by her husband last June. “Ndalama zinkavuta ndiye atayipeza anaganiza kuti ndizipanga gain”). - “money used to be a problem so when he found some he thought I should make a BS”. He found the investment money through ganyu, but otherwise no one helps her running the BS. Buys at Balaka 2 x per week at 1000mk and sells only here at [tiny crossroads market] 400/600mk profit 3 days per week, the other days she just stays because it is too far to walk more often to Balaka. There is currently no other place to get tomatoes, in Balaka they come from Ntcheu. At Liwawazi all finished now. Of her profit buys ndiwo, soap, salt, paraffin. Bought a dengu [round flat basket], plates, mphasa [mat]. She decides on expenditure as she is the one who stays at home, knows best what is needed - “Ndinaganiza ndi ineyo, kusowekera kwa ziwiyanso” husband also stays at home usually has a leg problem, walking is difficult. When he feels better, he builds houses. Other income sources: cotton + groundnuts. This year harvested little maize (5 bags), 3 and half bales of cotton (used money to buy 6 bags of maize, cloths, windows for house, a pig and kept to hire ganyu) and ½ bag of mtedza (part for selling, part for eating, part kept for replanting). She owns 1,5 acre, husband none, rent 4 acres. Both of them work on field + ganyu.

Paula agreed to this specific husband because "ndinaona kuti ndi mhatso ya Mulungu." [saw it as a gift from God]. Was also proposed a year earlier but then wasn’t thinking about marriage yet, refused. He is a good husband. “Ndinatamuzikire, osayendayenda, sindimamva munthu kuti anali pena pake. Titakhala pansi tinapatsana maganizo onena kuti: momwe kulili kunjaku penapake pamafunikana kukhululupirirana. Chifukwa dzikoli silili bwino, ndiye tinamvetsetsana ndi kuunikirana moti panopa tikukhala bwinobwino.” [I trust in him, he is not moving around. I don’t hear people saying he was at other places. After we sat down, we shared thoughts saying according to how it is here (in the world) it is important/gewenst to be faithful to each other, because the world is not good nowadays (often meaning “matenda”, says Gertrude). So we understand each other and show directions so that now we are staying very well.]

Says BS made it easier for her to get the things she needed (kitchen tools, mat, ndiwo, soap) “Ndowo ndimapeza mosavutikira.” [It is not difficult to find relish]. Others who just stay lack money, but I don’t have problems, take the money and buy what I want - munthu oti akungokhala amasowa ndalama, koma ineyo sindikuvutika. Ndichokwakho ndalalayo kugula zomwe ndikufuna. Why not all women run a BS? Don’t have money to start, or just don’t think of it. Advantages of selling tomato: can use own tomato for ndiwo, doesn’t loose money on buying. Disadvantage: on way back from...
Balaka some break, then make no profit. Knows one org. that gives out loans, CUM, but hasn’t considered it herself because doesn’t know advantages + disadvantages.

Lucia (20) from J. village, sells mandasi since last year March. From April to June this year changed to fish but stopped due to lack of money (transport costs + high investment needed). Decided: Ineyo ndi amayi anga, chiffukwa cha mavuto. Abambo athu anakwawira mkazi wina ku Lilongwe.” [My mother and I decided that I would so BS, because of problems. My father married another woman in Lilongwe]. He left in 2001, since then managed through ganyu, was taught how to make mandasi by cousin, got money for ingredients from mother. Choose mandasi because don’t need much investment money. While mother takes care of the other kids, she makes and sells alone. Buys ingredients at [nearest tradingcenter], ½ x per week (sometimes all money is used at home, then do ganyu to find new money). Buys for about 500mk (1kg flour = 100mk, mafuta 400mk, yeast, sugar) and sells for about 800mk = 300mk profit per 2/3 days of selling. Doesn’t sell much but lacks investment money for more profitable BS like matemba or tomatoes (bought a lot these days). BS doesn’t have a big impact because profits not big. But at least can buy soap now to wash body and clothes, lotion. Advantages of mandasi: she helps people who pass by to get food, while at the same time it helps her family to get food. Disadvantages: If not well made, many people sick. Non BS women “cannot get the things I am getting, for them it is difficult to find soap etc.” At first she need maize from own nkho kwwe to add to flour, but maize is finished now, this even less profit. Often thinks about getting a loan to increase BS, but registration fee…

Is not married, stays with mother and 6 younger brothers and sisters. She does BS because eldest. Decides together with mother on expenditure, because they are the eldest. Also income through ganyu, nandolo, mtedza (cannot manage cotton, too much work for only mother and + daughters). Use money to buy clothes, food, soap, lotion, chigayo. Gives mandasi money to mother. Stopped school at std7 because of problems, lacking clothes. Also to help her mother, as eldest child.

Alisa (28) from C. village sells tomato and matemba. husband decides, works at [large commercial estate] which brings in money once a month, leading wife to make debts during month. When receiving his salary, they had to pay off money debts and were left with little money for the new month. Asked her what BS she wanted, choose tomatoes + matemba because they had money for such an investment. Started in Feb, 2007 with husband’s salary. Buys 2 x per week at Liwonde (walks via [nearest tradingcenter] to tarmac, there in shared taxi). Buys 3 or 4 cartons of matemba at 600/700mk + transport 200mk. Sells here every day. Makes about 150mk profit per carton. Tomatoes, she buys at Balaka these days, finished at Liwawadzi, at 1500mk sells at 1800mk. With profit buys clothes for kids or food (but no ndiwo, because has her own). husband decides how to use the [BS] money- she gives her profit to him: kuwapatsa ulemu chiffukwa ndi wamkulu m’nyumba [to pay respect to him because he is the elder] (28 vs 32), married in 1999- now first marriage. Are from same village, used to play together as kids. “Ndinali wamasiye ndiye atabwera kundifunsira, “ unali mwayi kuti ndapeza mwamuna andisunga.” (was an orphan and when he came to propose to me & told myself “ you are lucky, that you have found a man to keep me/provide for me.” plus for younger sister who stayed with her. Could share the soap husband would give her with this sister. Was proposed before, but them her heart wasn’t ready. -

Left school at std5, because couldn’t pay the school fees, chased away. He is good husband - “timamvetsetsana, kulima limodzi, mwana akadwala timapita limodzi ku chipatala, chakudanyakso abale ange akakhala kuti aliche amawapatsa.” [we are dressed, working together in the field, if a child is ill we go to the hospital together, gives food to my relatives if they don’t have].

Stays with husband and 3 kids (2000, 2002,2007) injections for birth control at hospital, because both she and husband don’t have parents who could help them take care of kids. Other income sources: for
husband works at [large commercial estate] + cotton (+sometimes sell maize if they have surplus. One acre for maize, 1 ¾ acre cotton - hers, from parents. husband has 1, 5 acre at his village. Do farming together with ganyu workers. Running this BS has changed a lot. “Zisintha kwambiri, sitikumavutika, ndisanayambe gain, ndimapempha mchere, chifukwa cha kuti ndinalibe ndalama. Sopo sakusowa. Akalandira ndalama timakhala tilibe ngongole.” [It changed a lot, we do not have problems anymore. If I had not started doing BS, I would be begging salt. Soap would be lacking. We do not have delts]. Type of woman who start BS: kumakhala kuganiza kuti ndikamapanga izi zindithandiza [those who think: if I do this it will help me]. They have problems, some lack money to start. Advantages: have enough ndiwo for own use. Disadvantage: tomatoes easily destroyed. Easy to consume too much matemba themselves. Never thought about taking a loan, husband gave her his salary to start. Doesn’t know any org. that gives loan, therefore took more to increase BS.

In order to be able to continue BS, one seems to need financial back up like salary.

**Nov 12 Wednesday**

A funeral is being prepared: leafs have been put on the road near the graveyard, men are digging a grave, women are preparing a meal under the tree in front of the graveyards entrance. Woman from M. village died while staying with her husband in Blantyre. As her daughter is at this graveyard too they will put her here. The body has already arrived at M. village (after Mudzi A) and will later today be brought to the graveyard here. Two chickens have already been brought from M. village to be cooked by the women, for the men who dig the grave and themselves. The women are from Mudzi B and Mudzi A. (one from the Musitafa family, Nola) and some unfamiliar faces, probably from M. village. The men who dig are selected, each time the same men, says Gertrude. In order to join the women’s cooking, one has to pay something, said Livia. - Ask one of the women who cook later! --> Pay 50mk once to participate + 100mk annually. After harvest all villagers contribute something. Some maize or money. [Later:] more and more women gather under the tree. Daughter-in-law of Eveles and Rashida pass by to chat on their way to tree too. Explain about the bungwe [organization]: contribute 20mk each time + 100mk annually. Is used for helping the bereaved family in case they cannot afford to buy chitenje to wrap the body in e.g.. Also annually each HH contributes some maize or nandolo to the treasure of the bungwe, who is chosen to store the food for funeral occasions. The women cook indeed for the grave diggers plus themselves. This org. exists for long time already, but in past fewer people participated. Now, however death is everywhere, omnipresent, everybody has to deal with it, to much greater extent than in past. Therefore much more people now join in. So that when they themselves are faced with a death in their family, people will come to help. Daughter-in-law of Eveles tells of somebody who never helped to cook at funerals and had to do all the work of fetching water etc alone, when she had a death in family. The bereaved family cannot manage to also cook for the grave diggers, and dig the grave etc, therefore helping each other.

Yesterday late afternoon Jane was knitting with Gertrude and said she was going to get blood test today, at the hospital on the way to Balaka. Why? Just decided to. I told her I’d like to go with her, but as I already expected she didn’t come to pick us up. This morning women were also talking about testing their blood. - Is there a temporary VCT nearby, or did the clinic start offering tests for the first time? One woman told the others she had gone yesterday (Blessings), but didn’t tell about results. Hilda said her husband refuses to go, others then told her to go to the clinic herself, get condoms and put them in the house. If he asks what those are, you can tell him to go to the clinic and find out himself. The women complained that men from this village cannot allow to go there (will not go there). Ada said “I cannot go there” without further explaining. Venesi told the others to go to the clinic and get condoms, she can’t herself because she doesn’t have a husband.

Amila had gone to her relative Fissa to borrow a scissors, but Fissa had refused to give her “because
there is AIDS nowadays,” Amila complained to Gertrude and Livia.

Teleza said during interview that she doesn’t own a cell phone, but this morning she came to ask me to knit/crochet her a black little bag for her cell phone (simple Nokia) Says she doesn’t have time to come and learn knitting herself. Gertrude charges her 30mk for it “because in Lilongwe asks 50mk for it”. Gertrude was also requested to crochet a holder for a ½ litre water bottle - should be completely closed (no holes) so that people can’t see what is in it, just water or may be a soft drink. For grandson of Jasmine, living with her. Charging 40mk, went to bring yesterday morning after finishing making it, but he didn’t have the money ready so she took it home again, as planned because otherwise people may start thinking she gave it for free, have to ask after money, forget “mawa” [tomorrow] etc.

Livia is preparing to have bricks burnt for a new house, to be build next year, but burning now before rains start. Now staying in big house with Phingi (her mother). Gertrude saw Timenjenji and Molly go to [tiny crossroads market] to sell groundnuts and tomatoes respectively. Both didn’t mention this as source of income during interview.

Mr Ntawanga ordered a chipewa, hat, simple muslim head cover. Black with white lines. At 60mk, while he is doing ganyu to find money for food…. Among others building house for daughter of Rashida.

At borehole young women (not from this village), one was explaining to others that she divorced her husband because he wanted to sleep with her sometimes up to 5x per day, and then also in the night. Also when she was menstruating. Compared his behaviour to the MASAF project, (?).

Emra still here. Amila complained at borehole that she will stop taking care of her - being her relative with head wound, hence difficult to fetch water- because Emra continues the same behaviour of sleeping with Ainessi’s husband. Amila does not agree/approve of this behaviour, therefore thinks of stopping helping her, Ainessi’s husband is said to have come the evening of the day Emra come back from Lilongwe to sleep with her.

How to continue the data collection? Still have few follow up questions for some people, but then what? More detailed, case studies? Interview/talk with development org’s in Balaka? Venesig Mr Langmwale from Concern Universal, who I met at the tree planting workshop? (and who promised me to bring some project documents the next day, but didn’t). Ask about project, implementation, his specific role, participation, impact (evaluation) etc.

Line of people (men first) pass by singing, carrying with cloth over it, all enter graveyard, most of the cooking club join them, some stay under the tree - the moslims, maybe. Some more singing and praying at the graveyard, then, maybe 10 minutes later, all go back home again. Some even laughing, most talking normally.

Asked Elube why + how she started a zigumu [snack] BS recently: her HB decided because “kusowa” [lacking]. Her mother then taught her how to make zigumu [why chose zigumu?] and she borrowed 500mk {from who? Relative or money-lender?}. Sells at [tiny crossroads market] and at “grocery”, but few people buy, isn’t making much profit, that’s why they are only eating mango’s. - pointing at daughter eating a mango. But mango’s are good! I say. Ah, but not when it’s for breakfast, for lunch, each day... Now waits for the rain so she can do ganyu to pay back the debt. (Goes to sell herself?)

After funeral Victoria and Alinafe came by to chat. So hot, so hot - everybody agreed several times during conversation. They thought the rain will come soon, because of the terrible heat, the hard winds, the clouds. There was even some thunder at a distance (but all cleared within an hour or so….)
Said that as soon as the rains start people will start planting. If it starts in the morning, people will plant that very same afternoon. Both received coupon (for 2 bags of fertilizer sharing) and already bought their fertilizer (800MK). Some people mix the 2 types to make work easier, to not having to apply twice [rather, to have enough for whole field - 101008]. But one can see a difference between fields where both types were applied at the same time and fields where they were applied separately at the right stages (one at planting, second when maize is about 10cm high). Said that during the recent concern universal tree seminar it was announced that from 9 Nov on, people could get their blood tested at [nearest trading center] and some other place, but they don’t know till when. From that side of Mudzi A nobody has gone, “mantha”, are afraid. Victoria had attended the 3 day seminar and says they were informed on the first day that on the second, someone might come to teach them about HIV/AIDS. Many people don’t know much about it, she said, so she thought it was good, but all groups gave exactly the right answers, I said. Because in each group there was someone who know, if everybody would have been asked individually it would have been different, she says. The problem, they continue, is particularly with those who go to the lake to buy fish for their trade. There it is easy to sleep with other men/women.

Victoria’s new house is not yet finished, windows are still missing etc. Thinks she can move in by December, her mother will stay in her own house. So that when Victoria would die, her children at least have their own house.  {why is Victoria doing so well???

ICRISAT project, only one from their side (Mudzi A II) is participating, Josephine, because she happened to be present at the tree planting day, when Mr Chikombo came to register people. Say that ICRISAT wants all 6 people to be making 13 ridges - will be problematic to find such an exact field, they think. At the concern universal seminar people complained that the GVH took all items like watering canes etc, which according to concern should be kept by a treasure and used for the project. If this is not the case they will come to take the items away.

Gertrude talked with Livia about blood testing. She said she had gotten a test at [nearest trading center] when she was pregnant. For now doesn’t have a husband, so no need to go, but will go again when she has a new husband.

GVH had told Gertrude she was happy, because her husband went to one of his other wives, so she didn’t have to take of him anymore. However, he get so ill that she went to the other wife too to take care of him together, stayed there for 1 night. After this wife he also went to his third wife and now is back with GVH again.

At Rashida’s a new house is being built with unburnt bricks made by Rashida, building done as ganyu by Mr Ntawanga. House is for daughter who recently got baby.

Some nights back Jane had been chatting at Jasmine’s with that one’s grandsons. When walking to her own house they continued their conversation, screaming very loud. He said he wouldn’t sleep with her. She said: you have girlfriend + I boyfriend, won’t be sleeping with you. He: even if that wasn’t the case I wouldn’t sleep with you! Stop coming here. She: I’ll be back tomorrow. All joking, laughing, pretending to be mad. Very loud, very late. GVH reprimanded her later for behaving “as if she had no parents”.

Nov 13 Thursday (full moon)

Gertrude overheard grandson of GVH + Sofia shout at Jane for having come home very late yesterday, at 10:30pm. Leaving at 6 in the morning saying she is going to visit friends, and then not
coming back until very late. She said she had gone for blood testing. Doesn’t take that long! You have been with a boy and your friend was also with a boy, don’t you know that you can get pregnant?
And then next year you won’t be able to go back to school. Grandson said he will ask her friend what she really did, and that he will keep a big stick to hit her with whenever she decided to come back late again. From now on she will not be allowed to leave the fenced compound of GVH. Sofia added:
First you are screaming very loud, waking up everybody and cheating us saying that is wasn't you, now this. If she continues this behaviour she will be send to live with her mother at J. village (when asked earlier why she didn’t live with mother she said she was used to living with grandmother. She says she has a boyfriend who is in form 3, but also had talked about boyfriend who had gone to S.A. Jane told grandson + Sofia that she was sorry and wouldn’t do it again, would be back around 7pm from now on, not 10pm. But grandson still thought that is too late, 5pm. Grandson is about same age as Jane.

AT 8:30am Jane passes by house, is on her way to [small crossroads market] to receive money from the MASAF project for GVH.

Esnart passed by on her way to the borehole, came to look at the jersey Gertrude is knitting for her. Says she already went for blood testing twice [has 2 kids….?] and can’t go again, will see what to do when something happens, will face the problem when they come.

Grandsons of Jasmine passed by with 1 bag of fertilizer + 1 packet of maize seeds. She sold goat for over 4000mk, and received money for the pigs (even though much less than their real value). That she has money can also be seen from fact that she taken up her BSs again, making bread and zigumu - says Gertrude. Later grandson passes by with chicken and eggs to bring to someone who is buying them.

Florence, only wearing a chitenje on her way to borehole (which is quite far for her, by the way!), talking about the rain, the heat - as everyone these days. The heat is so intense that the rains must really be coming very soon. Received 1 coupon to share with her grandmother. Grandmother went yesterday to buy, she today. Names are kept track of. Found money through husbands recently started “fresh” BS = fresh fish. Goes to the lake at 2 in the morning on bike, or leaves at 4 in the afternoon and comes back early next day. Says that depending on whether one gets the fertilizer in time, people apply either separately or mixed (whether ADMARC is stocked in time, coupons distributed in time, and one does have to weed first to find money). Now it makes sense to me... Find it hard to believe that people will mix out of laziness while the difference is clear and the work is not THAT much...

Also met Hamra on the road with a hoe. Gertrude asked whether she went to her field; no, finding traditional medicine. For what, I asked. For different kinds of things, eg when a child is born dead. Gets 200 up to 1000mk for this. Learned from grandmother.

Interviews market women [small crossroads market].

Bulenda (23) from M. village, about 10 minutes walk from [small crossroads market]. Sells dried fish since her husband left her 2 years ago: kutindizipeza chithandizo cha ana anga - to find myself help/support for my kids. Started with selling zitumbuwa and zigumu because just after harvest kids find left over maize cobs in the fields and have money. Sold near school. Her twin brother sells chicken food in Blantyre, she asked him for money to start BS with. When maize and oil became expensive she changed to fish this year. After harvest she’ll go back to zigumu and zitumbuwa again, and then later back to fish.

Buys her fish at Mangochi turn-off in Liwonde, 2 or 3 times per week. Buys for 1000mk (+ 200mk transport costs), making at about 900mk profit [don’t know whether that includes or excludes transport
costs. On market days sells at [small crossroads market], sometimes at Kampendensisi market (everyday market) and other days walks around through villages, passing by the houses to sell. Uses profit for soap, clothes…..

Had been married from 2000 - 2006; anapanga chiwerewere mwana ali wang’ono - he was unfaithful while child was still young. Gave birth in 2002 and 2003 (and when husband couldn’t sleep with her just after birth, slept with other women). He decided to end the marriage, she then moved back from his village to her own, working on her field instead of his. Stays alone with her 2 kids. Wants to marry one day (because “it’s nature” chilengedwe, but will see later [ndidzakwatira koma ndiwonetsetse kaye]. Good marriage = Tidzidzagwirizana zochita - discuss together and act as agreed. Advantages of being pa banja; Adzidzasamalira nyumba yanga, kaya ndikufuna imangidwenso. Adzidzatha kukwera pa denga [he will maintain my house or even build a new one, will climb on the roof (make new roof)]. But she would still continue her BS because he may not want or not be able to give what she wants at the moment she wants it, buy food, chitenje. Grows maize, nandolo and khobwe on her 1 acre. Went up to form3 because she was strong at that time. Brother paid for it, but started to drink a lot of beer and money vanished. Impact of BS on her life: zimene ndimavutika monga sopo ndimagula, ndalama ya chigayo, kaya zovala ndimagula. Now can buy the things that gave her problems, like soap, money for maize mill, clothes.

Type of women who do BS: amakhalidwe abwino, osakwiya, adzisangalala ndi ma customer. -Behave well, don’t fight but are happy with customers, chatting with all of them to attract them. Situation of “mavuto” is what makes women to start a BS. [easy victim for seducing men?] Disadvantages of running a BS is that some customers take merchandise saying they will pay later but don’t. Solution: don’t give on credit. Disadvantage of fish BS: fluctuating whole sale prices at Liwonde.

Mentions FINCA as org. giving out loans, came to her village to ask for people who wanted to take a loan, but she didn’t take: they put people in groups and when, after 1 month, some women are not able to pay back, the whole group will be punished.

Tahera (20) from K. village, within same Traditional Authority as [small crossroads market]: 70mk for bike taxi from village to [small crossroads market] market (app same as from [small crossroads market] to [tiny crossroads market] grocery, thinks Gertrude) Started in January this year to sell tomatoes, in march switched to dried fish. Bought tomatoes at 800mk, selling at 1000mk - little profit because some broke on way back, and they don’t stay good for a long time, go bad quickly. While dried fish doesn’t go bad. Started her BS with money her husband had given after their divorce and added to this through ganyu. To change to the more expensive BS of fish used her tomato profit and asked friends to bring her a carton of dried fish so she didn’t have to pay for the transport. After selling that one carton she had enough profit to now go herself to Liwonde (Mangochi turn-off) to buy. Usually buys 5 cartons of dried fish at Liwonde turn-off, but now only bought 2 because her house collapsed so she is building new one, spent money on that. Only goes once a week on Wednesdays due to lack of money, buys at 2000mk + 200 transport, sells at 3000mk = 800mk profit. Sometimes sells all fish in three days, sometimes it takes the whole week. On Thursdays sells at [small crossroads market], other days at home. With profit buys soap, food, school fees (kids go to a paid school).

Got married at 13 in 2001. Father died, mother can’t walk, so was difficult at home, therefore got married quickly. He was a BS man and told her they should sacrifice one of their children in order to become rich. Then she decided to divorce, because these kids were the ones to take care of her later. He doesn’t support his children now, even worse: took everything from her house and destroyed the house itself when they divorced… She now stays alone with her 2 kids. After divorce in 2006 manage through ganyu + support from her mother (who makes rosaries for sell) Sometimes sold
her nandolo when problems pakhomo [at home]. Furthermore cultivates maize (doesn’t sell) on 1.5 acre, left school in std7, because of same problems that pushed her into early marriage. There wasn’t even money to buy a pen for her.

The BS changed her life: panopa ndikumagula sopo, sindikupempha amayi, panopa apuma (Now I buy soap, I am not begging my mother for it, she can rest now). Vuto lilikulu ndi kudya, panopa chimanga ndikutha kugula [The biggest problem is food, now I can buy maize]. Type of women starting BS: Akusowa chithandizo, ena atha kukhala kuti ali pabanja koma chithandizo chimasowa, (they lack support, some can be married but support is lacking). Disadvantages: many… nsanje (jealousy), ziwembe(robbery). Once all her money was stolen after selling I carton, she to borrow money to continue the BS. Will marry again in future, but not now. Receives many proposals, but she is still remembering the behaviour of first husband, afraid to encounter similar man. Will marry when: mavuto azachuma atapitilira, (when financial problems persist). A marriage is good when the two are able to understand each other. Disadvantage: “monga ngati ine ndabwera kuno bwenzi maganizo ali kunyumbako kuleka ampalibe gani kuno. Ndikakhakha ndikumutelere madzi kuti musungamano, ndikamphikire from Chakudya kuti adye. Panopa maganizo amenewo palibe. Panopa ndikuganiza kuti Pamela adya bwanji, asamba bwanji. [If I had a husband at home I would have to stop doing this BS, would have to give him water so he can go and wash, would have to cook him food. Now I don’t have that thought, now only thinking about how my kids will eat and wash]. When she is away from home to buy and sell fish (Wednesday + Thursday), her mother takes care of children.

Mentions MADEF when asked whether she knows org’s that give out loans, they came to her village to find people who wanted a loan. - chifukwa chakuti anabwera m’mudzi mwathu, ndi kumauza anthu ofuna kutenga koma ineyo sinditha kutenga chifukwa magain ake ndi momwe akuyendera kundipanga force ndigwiritse ndalama zochepa iwonso akufuna ndalama tomweyo. -She didn’t take loan because in their BS they force one to pay back, even if you sold for little money, they take that money.

Witness (45) from J. village, which belongs to group Mudzi B. Sells only masamba, since last October. Was married from 1977-2004, when husband died. Decided herself to start a BS, choose masamba because it is nearby to get, one if her children did ganyu to find money to start, 500mk. When she makes some more money she will change to selling fish, to find more profit. Started ‘kuti ndidzipeza chithandizo’ [so that I find support].

Buys at Liwawadzi, 3 x per week, at 400mk, making at about 200/300mk profit after selling in 2 days. Usually walks around through villages to sell, this is her third time to sell at [small crossroads market]. In past she has been brewing beer, but renting all the materials was expensive, difficult to pay. Uses her profit to buy maize.

Since her husband died no one has proposed to her, but she would agree so that he can help her: building a house, a nkho wwe, farming together. Plus the secret thing….. (chinsinsi). Stays on her house with 2 children and 1 granddaughter. Other children are married, they only find money through her BS now, but will do ganyu when people start planting. Grows herself maize, g/nuts and nandolo on 2 acres, farms with her children. Couldn’t finish interview because man of shop nearby the women selling vegetables under the tree came to see that there is no one else selling for her, so she needs to get back to her BS…

We went late this time, arriving at about 3:30pm. Still not many people. Some selling fish on simple structures, hiding from sun under it, mostly men, 2 women. Under the tree quite a number of women selling tomatoes, nandolo, masamba, onions, maize cobs, thobwa, bananas. Not all them could sit in tree’s shade, so some in full sun. The later and cooler it got, more people came. Besides food, 2 0ld
men selling tobacco, various heeps of second hand clothes, some structures exposing new clothes, old clothes, zitenje.

0792 Met Emiyo, whom we interviewed last time, when she was selling tomatoes. Today she wasn’t selling, because there were already too many women selling tomatoes. Even 3 women from very far had come to sell. She had gone to visit her sister in the hospital and now just came to check how BS was going and chat with her friends. Her house just nearby, went there to ask some more questions and take picture. Continues her BS even though husband has income as builder to help each other. He may not always have money, then she can help + other way round. Have even a khola with pigs, are doing well. House with windows of glass and glass roof. The type of women who can run a BS: those with a wish (khumbo) to run a BS, others just don’t think about it. Kuthetsa umphawi = to end poverty. Forgot name of an org. that gives loans. Doesn’t want one anyway, because one can get a loan of 5000MK and have to pay back 750 after 2 weeks. Is impossible, some days don't sell any tomato, few people passing by... Patricia, the one we interviewed earlier about her zitenje BS - wasn’t there at [small crossroads market].

0793

**Nov 14 Friday**

0794 I saw husband of Amila work on roof of Emra, so she plans to stay here. Esnart came by to give Gertrude 200mk for the jersey that she is about to finish for Esnart’s daughter. Don’t have the other 100 yet. Gertrude told her she will keep the jersey till she has it. Esnart told us her husband had sent money from S.A, but part of it was stolen, therefore she couldn’t buy fertilizer yet. But does spend on a jersey...

0796 Met Rosemary’s husband on the road from Mudzi A to Mudzi B yesterday. Drunk and with a bundle of grass, but Gertrude hasn’t seen him at Rosemary’s house since.

0797 While knitting outside Jane passed by singing aloud (already earlier Gertrude had heard her say to friend at borehole that she wasn’t going to stay within the fence of her house, the friend was also saying that her mother had shouted at her for coming home late. They laughed: both shouted at…). Joined us on the mat, chatted with Gertrude while lying down. Told that the owner of the house we staying phoned GVH saying that he wants to come back Feb/March and wants to gather all the 12 children that he has with a (large) number of women from surrounding villages, and that he wants them all to stay with him at the GVH’s house while we still stay in his. Jane said that this man also slept with Livia and had given her money, same with Livia’s elder sister. Furthermore [Jane] said that she didn’t go for blood testing after all, and that the testing will continue till Sunday only. That tomorrow she [Jane] will be going to Balaka with a friend, just to walk around, hadn’t been there for quite a while. Wants to get her hair braided, buy new trousers. With what money?, Gertrude asked. Brother and grandmother had both borrowed 250mk from her and will be paying back. Laughed when Gertrude asked again how she got that money in the first place, not answering, had made only 300 doing ganyu, she explicitly confirmed again, which she used to pay for the jersey that Gertrude made. When Doris passed by with a bucket and greeted only me and Gertrude, Gertrude asked Jane whether they are not on talking terms (so that’s the way to show one is not happy with another, literally not greeting when passing by, and that’s why it’s important to greet or at least say ‘ndadutsa’ [I am passing by!] when passing otherwise it can be interpreted as an animosity). Indeed have not been on speaking terms, had fight over fact that Doris’s grandmother Hamra advised Doris after evenly letter issue to go to TA. [small crossroads market] because GVH wasn’t big enough to handle these questions, and even to kill GVH or bewitch her.
Went to Mudzi B 2 (mr Ntawanga transporting bricks from there by bike) to follow up interviews with Christina and Mwayi. No surprising answers. Mwayi says she has no reason to get married again (30 widow). She is growing different crops and after selling there is no one who tells her that to do with the money, can do as she like herself. The only disadvantage of being alone is that it will be difficult to build a new house, may she want one (but house looks fine, even bed outside, grass but windows). Mwayi agreed to marry her second husband because “kusowa kwa nyumba” she says (was staying with mother), and third husband because her mother died and was told that it would help in her grieve over being an orphan, to have someone to chat with, she took an advance at the place where she is currently doing ganyu in order to buy fertilizer. Clears and makes ridges on plot smaller than 1 acre for 1000mk.

Coming back home Naima (daughter of Balakasi) was waiting for us, complaining that we are always “kuyendayenda” [walking around] made an order for socks and hat for baby girl, because will be visiting her mother-in-law in Lilongwe (she laughed when she told me, about fact that Naima desperately wants her baby to look good for this). Took long time before she made a decision about the colour that she must be using. Finally decided on hard green with white. Was supposed to go tomorrow, but as she said she will be finished tomorrow, Naima postponed her travel to Sunday. Paid the costs, 100mk at forward now. Fatima also stopped while on her way to the borehole. I asked her why she and husband are not staying in her village. Will move there as soon as they harvest their maize, she said, first had to build a house there. Received coupon, but has not bought fertilizer yet, lacking money. Not received from brother-in-law in S.A? No, only mother-in-law = Elube. I asked whether that money is not taken by her husband to play cards, no. she said when Fatima left: now we finally know the real answer, couldn’t believe that someone in this period could borrow out 500mk - Elube said she borrow this amount to start zigumu BS, but not selling much, will have to do ganyu in order to pay back.

Later I say to her; long trip, all the way to Lilongwe. Expensive answers she, indeed it is! Ok 200mk on bike from here to Balaka, from here to Balaka, from B to LL 1000mk, then in LL another 50-100mk. Plus going back. “At this time....” Add her surprised.

Since the tree seminar Pamela has not been seen at all by her. Naima and Julia (chatting at our mat) said rains are late this year. In evening had a small shower various showers in night.

Market woman, Witness at [small crossroads market] wants to get married again (but no one proposes …) because building house + nkholwe for her, farm together + “secret thing” so sex is an issue! Others have also sometimes gargled shamefully when I asked about advantages of being marked/why they want to get married.

Nov 15 Saturday (heard hyena in night)

Various times showers in the night, but no real, hard rain, so sill no planting today.

Left after breakfast (mango and potato, neighboring girl came to ask for some tree burning charcoal) to VCT at C. village, at the mother-and-child-health-clinic, past [small crossroads market]. Met Nelia beside road at water tap, her husband went to Kasungu and told her to move to his parents, said she will come to Mudzi B today to order hat and shoes for her child.
No-one at clinic, health man under tree in front of clinic. Started testing on 10th of Nov, equipments and training from NAC via District Assembly. Five week training, man was already employed at this clinic (lives with wife and 2 kids on other side of road, nice government house, name is James, asked when I would come again to chat). Disseminated message that people can get tested through a publicity vehicle and a meeting with local leaders. Say they will only be testing for this week to stimulate people to come, but will stay. Tested people in past week (= first days after opening)

\[
\begin{array}{cc}
F(HIV+) & M(HIV+) \\
11(0) & 11(0) \\
17(1) & 24(1) \\
8(1) & 23(0) \\
8(1) & 21(0) \\
23(3) & 13(1) \\
67(7) & 92(2) \\
= 10\% & = 2\% \\
159(9 tested positive) = 5\%
\end{array}
\]

Today one woman had come before us, after the questions, and after testing me and Gertrude, 7 people (men 4, old 2, and young 5) were waiting to be tested. They were called in as a group. When I was in, older woman was saying that most people in that village are afraid to get tested, but at least this year more were going for testing than last year.

All persons who tested positive were referred to the ART clinic in Balaka. I want people wanted to receive condoms, each received 20 condoms and were demonstrated how to use it. Other places to get tested are at [large commercial estate], [nearest tradingcenter], Chiyendausiku, Kapandansinsi (temporary because close to Chiyendausuku) and of course Balaka. He reports to the District HIV Coordinator in Balaka.

When I requested to be tested myself, James wrote me a small note with date of today, nr 163 (hence, nr app is nr of people having come for testing since opening this VCT service), asked date.

3 months from now to come again for testing. Then asked me if I knew what HIV and AIDS stands for, how one gets it, how to avoid. Why I am worried and come for testing. Whether I am married and want to receive condoms. (No, husband is not here anyway - But don’t you have a boyfriend here? No, why? Don’t you want?). When Gertrude answered that she was not married she was not offered condoms! Asked again whether I felt ready to be tested. Showed me the posters on the wall with pictures of the 3 types of testing materials. All just with one drop of blood, waiting either 10 or 15 minutes for results. One stripe means test was effective and one is HIV negative. Two stripes means HIV positive. Then a second test is done, a different type, same idea. If the two tests show different results than a more thorough and expensive test is done. In room some simple chairs and a table with big recordbook, and in corner a sink with boxes with needles, alcohol, tests and cotton swabs.
Chatted some more while waiting (what my religion was, whether I am a volunteer, whether I will help them advertise, stimulate people from village that it is important to get tested). Then asked whether I was ready for result: negative. When I came out of this room, She decided to go to. James told me that here in Malawi “people tend to think that if they are tested positive, they will die the very next day”.

Walking back passed by [small crossroads market], bought masamba and nandolo, and interviewed 2 more selling women;

Brenda (46yrs), staying at C. village - not far from [small crossroads market]. Today sells tomatoes, other times mandasi, bananas, masamba when one BS sizikuyenda [is not going well], changes to other “chifukwa ndi kumudzi” [because it is in village]. Have to find small money for salt, just trying whatever goes well at each time. Her husband decided that it would be good for her to start a BS, (now 4th year) instead of just staying, in order to find salt for at home. He himself “samakonda kuyendayenda kumagulitsa” [does not walk around to sell]. He make mats and handles of hoes.

“Anati ndalama ndi yanga, ndizionera za ku kitchen, iwonso ndi yawo) ---- he said the money was hers, she has to look over the kitchen, he has his own money. Didn’t take out loan to start, found money through selling cotton. Married in 1980 till now, secret of the long marriage is that God gave them the gift of love….. He is a good husband: farming together, growing cotton together and after selling discussing together how to use the money, buy own cloths, each choosing their own. Only had 1 child, who gave birth to 4. One of the granddaughter stays with Brenda & husband, she has no other children, and daughter has enough, otherwise Brenda would be alone. This granddaughter is sometimes send to sell, especially in weekends, because on week days goes to school, in std4, but today granddaughter was sent somewhere by mother.

VCT CLIENTS FORM

DATE……………15/11/08…………………………………………
SITE CODE………………02……………………………………
CLIENT CODE………………163…………………………………
CO. CODE…………………………………………………………
NEXT VISIT……………15/02/09………………………….

Buys at Balaka, Ntcheu or Liwawadzi. Tomatoes she is currently selling she bought yesterday in Balaka. Went on bike taxi = 300mk - when she has no money, she walks. When she has a lot of money she goes to Ntcheu to buy, but that costs 300/400mk transport one way, plus tomatoes on way back, plus paying for someone to help her carry. But then she can sell for 1 to 3 weeks. At Balaka usually buys 3 x 5Ltr at 500mk, 5Ltr takes about 2 days to sell, says she makes about 100mk profit per 5Ltr - which does not conclude with that transport would last her 600mk. She speculates that she may not calculate all the money she spends when it gets into her hands when selling tomatoes, maybe only the money that is still in let pocket when reaching home. Sells at [small crossroads market], Chiyendausiku, Chikombolo, Mlangali, all markets but also passing by houses. Gertrude: mumayendayenda! [you move around a lot!] Brenda laughs hard, confirming. With profit she buys chimanga [maize], chakudya [food], salt, ndiwo [relish], soap. Sometimes gives her husband,
sometimes keeps herself.

0835

HH finds money through her BS, HbS selling of mats + hoe handles and selling cotton, and growing tomatoes at dambo (husband- sometimes gives her to sell, sometimes sells himself). Also do ganyu: kupalira - "njala imakhala itawirikiza, mpamba wadula..” when hunger is everywhere, profit/investment money finishes (partly yao). At that time it is difficult to do BS, to find money, people don’t buy much, they themselves use their profit/investment money to buy food too, so can’t continue BS. Need ganyu.

0836

Whether BS changed life: Ndikumapeza chakudya monga ku mudzi kuno, ndikupezanso mehere, koma kusintha kwenikweni palibe. Ndalamabe ikuvuta. I am now buying food, also finding salt, but there isn’t any real change. Money is still a problem.

0837

No impact on her relationship with husband, to have independent incomes, doesn’t know any org’s that give out loans. In her village an org. that gives goats, to make manure because their village is big. Of every 10 people only received a fertilizer coupon - not her.

0838

Mitandire doesn’t know her age (60?), lives at C. village (where we went to get tested today). Sells veggies now, at other times bananas (but too hot now, can’t find bananas, while these days many people working at dambo, growing tomatoes etc. Buys whatever she can find. Now, sells 3days per week, farms the other days. Now at [small crossroads market], but also passes by houses. In banana season, buys here and goes to sell at Balaka.

0839

Started long time ago. husband was just staying, only farming, she decided to start: Ndinaganiza ndine mkazi chifukwa cha ana ndizithandiza. Ndikabwera kumsika ndimatenga zofunika. Ndiwo timagula pochoka kumsika, mafuta anyale (parafin) timagula pochoka kumsika. Mavuto amachepa. [I thought: I am a woman and I must help my children. If I come to the market I get what I need. We buy relish, parafin. The problems are few now]. Is still with her first husband, married long time ago, he is good husband: “khalidwe, akanakhala woipa ndikanawathamangitsa, [this behaviour, if he would have been bad, I would have chased him away]. Kusamala ana, akamadya osawapangira nkhanza (she: some men eat a lot, leaving little for their children, nkhanza, abuse], chimene utapeze amatenga mwamuna kupatsa ana [shares what he finds with children]. Chifukwa akukhala nawo ana bwinobwino, (because he lives well with the children). He does have other wives, but she is his first. I: why do you allow that? “Sangatheke amuna samalola. Bola akukusamala….” (impossible to disagree, he wouldn’t allow, doesn’t allow. Atleast, he is taking care of me). Although he apparently takes care of her she does continue her BS, because he may not always at any time be able to provide her with what she needs, then she uses her own money.

0840

Stays in house with husband, but 5 children (other 7 died) and 1 granddaughter. Find money through her BSs + growing cotton, chimanga, nandolo + doing ganyu on the days that she doesn’t sell. Type of women who start BS: “kuvutika”- kukhala olemera, gain siungapange! – Those who suffer/have problems. If you are rich, you can’t do BS. (Laughing...). Disadvantage is that people know you sometimes carry a lot of money and through chitaka (taking money without physically present, through witchcraft medicine) may take it from you. Arriving home, finding that money has disappeared and that she needs to do ganyu or borrow money to start up BS again. Has received a fertilizer coupon, but doesn’t have enough money yet. husband is now with his other wife, she will see whether he helps her get the money when he comes back. NB relieved when the interviews has over, had feared difficult questions she couldn’t answer, but it wasn’t
that hard at all!

Granddaughter of Jasmine passes by with fresh ‘scones’ - breads to sell to me, bought 5 at 10mk. Livia, Lizzie (with huge tin bucket full of water for us). Pamela (saying she had been busy fetching firewood in the last days to prepare for the rainy season and therefore hadn’t shown up lately here). Esnart came to knit or closh. Balakasi came to check on head and shoes that her daughter Naima ordered, with baby hat too small. Was very friendly with Esnart, asking about each other’s families etc. Later Naima herself came again with baby, to pick the knit work. Mother-in-law does not live in Lilongwe but elsewhere, more nearby (may be Ulongwe?), will travel tomorrow and be back on Monday. Has something to discuss with her. Women discussed that brother of Elube, son of old woman in Mudzi B taking care of brother who had TB oid at time of interview, came back from South Africa today. Is married elsewhere but first wanted to pass by his relatives. Brought 2 bikes, 2 bales of clothes, (looked like this at least) and 2 bags.

At one point Mphatso, daughter of Rosemary, was spotted in fields towards [tiny crossroads market], with a boy. Women were commenting that there may be a new relationship, since they were not just walking, but stopping to look at each other, the problem with men here, commented Pamela, is that, the first days they were very serious at loving you, but soon they will just leave you at home wondering where to find food.

Some of the husbands in S.A will soon be returning husband of Lizzie in Dec, husband of Esnart any time now,(why?), may be for Christmas holiday, guessed Gertrude, and make their wife pregnant, who will then give you lot of BS, Gertrude, as they all want heads and socks etc for their baby’s, said Balakasi.

If rains don’t start soon, people will start eating the seeds they kept for planting, the women discussed to. Gertrude refused to give Esnart the jersey she made for Esnart’s child because she is 100mk short of paying the total 300mk.

Pamela has not yet moved into her new own house (being built by son of sister Venesi with whom she currently stays). Will in Dec, bought fertilizer at 500mk + 150 for bike transport. Livia complained that the father of her last born brings too little, just 1 bar of soap, little money. Gertrude guess he comes about once every 2 weeks. Is helping her get firewood to burn the bricks with which he earlier wanted to build a house for her.

Esnart will move to her village when husband comes from S.A, because he will be going back and here people are stealing money from her because she is not from here. Gertrude thinks that Nelia was transferred to have at her mother-in-law’s while her husband is in Kasungu so that one can keep an eye on her, afraid that she will be moving around with other men. As soon as the rains start people will plant their maize, then make ridges and plant cotton - will be very busy.

Two boys passed by, one said that he went for blood testing today and saw me go there too, so why can’t you go there too?

**Sunday Nov 16**

Finally had rains in the night, the morning is clouded, the soil dark - but Innocent says people still find it too little to start planting. At around 11 pm, 3 men at our door, asking if they can sleep here.
Gertrude told them to go to the chief. (ask forgiveness via grandson of GVH, came from very far and thought wife of owner of house was still staying here.

Yesterday afternoon other women were ridiculing that Naima's husband sometimes goes to fetch water on his bike. "My husband would never do that, wouldn't allow, afraid that his friends will laugh at him." Others however said it is good that he is helping his wife. Naima herself said that the water is for washing HIS body and HIS clothes.

While Fatima was knitting here after breakfast, [I can’t walk because of nasty blister from walking to clinic yesterday --> knitting at home all day, joined by women.], another woman came who just arrived from Mangochi to receive whatever her husband sent for her with the brother of Elube (left again on Nov 19 with a blanket). More katundu [luggage/stuff] arrived yesterday via the road passing Mudzi B 2, including 5 bikes to give to others, from their relatives in SA.

Jasmine indeed already bought fertilizers said Innocent. Both share 1 coupon. Innocent hasn’t bought yet. Also told Gertrude that Jasmine wants to start selling fish again and Innocent wants to get a loan at [tiny crossroads market] (concern universal?), to start a BS, may be go with her mother to buy fish, or make zigumu and sell everyday at [small crossroads market].

Daughter of Mery came to order a hat and shoes (on behalf of Mery), for mother’s new born baby. Brought four small balls of different colour thread to make it with. Some women have torn a part old jersey’s to use the thread.

Levison and brother of Pamela & Venesi (who is building Pamela’s new house, hence in not Venesi’s son who does that, as I thought) came by one bike (one of these bikes came yesterday with man from SA). Stopped shortly to chat at veranda. On their way to find money. [How?] Levison said he wants a blue hat and bargained the price down from 60 to 50mk.

Tinenenji, sister Dorica and unknown face (also young woman) came to knit in afternoon. When Filimona passed by, they were saying that besides the 2 children she has now, 2 more have died. In total given birth to 4 children, of another man than her current husband. Leading the girls to comment that apparently there are few girls to marry these days, considering that this husband had to pick one of that has already given birth 4 times.

Dorica had met the ex-husband of Emra in his home village, where he told her that he is now with the one he wanted to get married to before marrying Emra. Tinenenji commented that: that girlfriend has another boyfriend who wants to get married to her too, so when the two men will meet, there will be a big fight, since ex-husband of Emra is disturbing the other man’s plans. He also said that he hadn’t meant to slash her head, but wanted to destroy her ear, but she ran away.

Tinenenji got up to talk to the husband of Fatima who passed by on a bike, when she came back the unknown face reprimanded her for talking just the two of them apart, should have called him to come to the
group, or pass by his house if she wanted to talk to him, not like this, separate herself from group to talk to him privately. He is married, you should respect your friend (Fatima).

Another man passed by, who apparently proposed to Dorica yesterday. The other two advised her to take his offer, saying ‘chikondi’ at several points, meaning that he loves her, “he can buy soap and salt and clothes for you and your mother and relatives!” Dorica answered that: he already have wife, only that she mistreats him, making him sleep outside the house while she sleeps inside. The others said she could just sleep with him at Lucius Banda’s place in Balaka, (because he has a wife at home). “You can choose there what you want to drink and eat nice”. He loves you, is serious, forget about his wife. Pamela came by shortly, on way to borehole, had kept some nandolo, that she now wanted to prepare, therefore didn’t stay too long.

Monday Nov 17

Jasmine passed by on way to pump (following granddaughter who went with big tin) and chatted shortly with chief Mudzi B in front of our house. She was saying that: her grandson wants to go back to his mother in Zomba, because there is not enough food here, while there they just harvested maize from dimba, and vegetables too. She will go there to receive some maize & veggies from her daughter.

Article in Vice Versa on AIDS pandemic, referring to Epstein’s recent book (the invisible cure) on why initially Uganda was able to drastically reduce the number of new infections - through promoting ‘Zero-grazing campaign. Developed by local leaders who understood that concurrent sexual relationship were main issue to be addressed, later condom promotion (UN) and abstinence promotion (US) had much less impact - less suitable, less in concurrence with local culture.

On our way to Chenawe passed by Chikondi’s house, who was sitting at her veranda, chatted very comfortably with her for a while, hasn’t bought fertilizer yet, needs to find money first. Is doing ganyu now at M. village, will get money for that, then buy, has finished making ridges on her own field, except on the part where she plans to grow cotton, will not make ridges there, just plant when the rains have started. Last year had finished with her own field earlier, but now because she is (very) pregnant, takes longer, but at least she did work hard - meaning the child will be a boy again. When it’s a girl, one is more tired and lazy. [Chikondi] was looking through the remainings of a primary school book in English, from when she went to school in Blantyre. When she has nothing to do, she looks through that (even though I am pretty sure that she doesn’t understand much of what is written there, about Nyasaland and English protectorate etc) I told she should come to us when she has nothing to do, then at least she can learn how to knit, then she talked with Gertrude for a while about prices of thread. Gertrude also said that there are threads and needles at our home, she can just come to practice. Chikondi said that she doesn’t want people to say that she knows already that her baby will live, therefore doesn’t want to knit something for it yet, nor wants Gertrude to knit something for it yet. Maybe the baby
will be born and leave again after few days).

First said that: this pregnancy was an accident, when I asked why she had not need any birth control method, she said she had been taking pills from the hospital for a while, but her body didn’t respond well to it, was menstruating the whole month. If her body had responded well to it, she could have been taking then, because husband wouldn’t know. He said however that he didn’t want to be feeding only children of another man, wanted his own child too. So she couldn’t avoid pregnancy in the traditional way, by putting a string around the waist, the number of knots with which you tie it respond to the number of years that you will not get pregnant, but when you work hard on the field the string may come off, then you may get pregnant, because can’t put it on again or has to take new one. One can also drink a traditional medicine once, after which you will never get pregnant again. Her mother, Mrs Ntawanga, took this after her last child because she was embarrassed to be pregnant at the same time as daughter Chikondi. Chikondi gave birth on Feb 17, her mother in Feb, also Elube took this medicine, and both have not become pregnant since. Chikondi says she tried injections too, but was menstruating whole month, most people, she says, don’t like using condoms because they know traditional medicines that they prefer to use. Chikondi had also asked in the hospital to be operated so she couldn’t have more children, but says they refused, a woman should at least have given birth to 4 children, so at least be left with the few kids if some die. Chikondi also said that: it may be problematic, because may be one finds a new husband who wants children. Men these days are problems, they say they love you in the first days, say they will take care of you, will stay with you till you die, and that they want to have a child, then you become pregnant, and they leave you. Next one comes, same story.

I: Is there any way you can raise your own sons to behave differently, when they are older? Children just copy the behaviour of their parents. The parents of her last husband (who has not come back anymore) must have behaved the same as he, that must be where he saw such behaviour. Her sons will them also copy the behaviour of their father. A mother can advise her son not to propose girls, but then he will say he will marry you, the mother, because you don’t allow him to propose other women, and still, they can just sneak out at night and secretly propose.

Her child will be born in January, will go to hospital for it because there people know a lot. It’s better to get pregnant in a different period, now it has kept her from working on the field as hard as usual, will try to do ganyu in coming months, but will be difficult. Large staple of nkhuni [firewood] next to kitchen, to prepare for rainy season.

We passed Elube on road with bag of nandolo on her head, app 100mk. Probably bought from Holy, who has been smart, will be making a lot of money, said Gertrude. By now people’s own nandolo harvests have finished, will be buying.

Chikondi has a small round veggie garden where she planted pumpkin. Surrounded with bricks (2 layers)
and topped with thorny branches to keep goats and chicken away.

Continued to Chenawe but found her ill, stomach aches. Indeed looked very ill, tired, lifeless, listless, problems swallowing as if she felt nauseous, has been to hospital in [nearest tradingcenter] last week, but they told her she is just growing old, there is little they can do to help. Did give medication though, but hasn’t helped so far. Daughter Julia was with her, together they complained that the government hospital in [nearest tradingcenter] only really helps the people who are related to them, only staff at giving them sufficient numbers of the good medication. We said we will come back another time and had one of the grandchildren come along to take at least some strong pain killers.

Phingi passed by again on way back from borehole (are burning Livia’s bricks today, need water to make mud to plaster the staple of bricks), saying to another woman that when the father of Livia’s last child will show up again (which he hasn’t since he came to help Livia fetch firewood for burning the bricks and wanted to sleep with her at the field and she refused), she will chase him because he promised to pay for ganyu, but up till now he hasn’t, and he promised to burn bricks for her but now her father is doing this. The other woman (the one in very small house who gave Gertrude knitted decorations as example) asked Phingi whether Livia was working on her own field. Yes, said Phingi, so that next yr she can take care of her children herself, live in her own house.

Before all this we first passed by Mr Ntawanga’s house for some agricultural questions. The structure that they are building in front of their house will be a goat khola, like in Mudzi A 2. FIDP visitors already passed by twice to check the progress, also some visitors from “forestry” have come to see the tree nursery that is also next to their house. While his wife is finishing the last ridges on their own field, he does ganyu on somebody else field in the morning and after that builds the house for Rashida’s daughter. Each village was ascribed a number of fertilizer coupons (only 30 something in Mudzi A). Not everybody in Mudzi A received, those who did not receive: Wisikesi (husband of Chenawe), Saibi, Suset, Patty, Makali (son of Hamra), Holy (but received), Rashida (did her husband receives, I asked? Has no husband, answered Mr Ntawanga - during interview she said she had! Maybe divorced?), Eliya, Mrs Ntawanga (but Mr Ntawanga received), Viola (but husband received). These were selected to not receive because they do not actively participate in any project activities, only show up when there is something to receive, so as to stimulate them, encourage participation in future. Mr Ntawanga says that this selection was made by all villages together.

He doesn’t know why this year only so few people could participate in the MASAF project. Only 3 including the chief. Chief Mudzi A was the one who selected them: Mr Mvula (very old husband of Chenawe) and Mr Tulipesi (HB of Viola).

Says it is normal that the rains have start end of Nov or beginning of Dec. only because last year they started earlier (Oct 18) do people now think that the rains are late.

At the Ntawanga’s the radio is on. Agness order a chipewa for her child and says she will come to pay for her husbands chipewa also, that she didn’t know he had ordered one. I told Gertrude, J will pay for Mr Ntawanga’s chipewa as thanks for all his assistance to my research.
For ICRISAT, he and Mr Chikombo selected a number of people with fields near the road, as they were told: himself, Mr Tulipesi, chief Mudzi B (because she also has a field, near the road), Levison: husband of Thokozani), Serena, they have now selected a field, where each of the participants has 4 ridges.

Went to Amila to give picture, (she asked about the one that Gertrude took of the 2 of us, said one day that others didn’t believe the 2 of us were on a picture together), found her sitting under tree with many other women from that side, some cutting masamba into a small pieces. Gertrude pointed out to me which girl is girlfriend of Jasmine’s grandson, who was screaming and shouting so loud that one evening with Jane. Boy passed by earlier too, very young still!

Then went to Molly’s house to check if there were some tomatoes to be bought but grandmother (Nola said she had taken them all to the market (grocery/[tiny crossroads market]). Jasmine and Evelin were sitting with Nola on her veranda (the husband at some distance under a tree). Sofia was selecting brown nandolo seeds from a bowl with mixed coloured seeds - explaining that these germinate best/give highest yield (kubereka bwino). Jasmine was buying about over half a 50 kg bag (30kg, thinks Gertrude) of maize seed from Nola for 900mk, for the other hundred (giving 2 notes of 500mk), she wanted nandolo - said she has harvested 2 bags this year but finished it all. Nothing left for planting, in her own maize seeds there were weaves, hadn’t had money at that time to buy chemicals. The bag with seeds will be enough for 2,5 acres, showed us her field walking back from Nola to our houses. In front of our house and Elube’s house, she used to have her house there, and her mother too, and other close relatives, but moved because of “madzi”, heavy water streams. And has another field at some distance, where she already planted yesterday (hybrid seeds which she bought with fertilizer coupon probably for 50mk 5kg) which made the others laugh at her, herself included.

Saw, with his bike in hand at house of chief Mudzi B, the ex-husband of Emra, who greeted us enthusiastically. At borehole Gertrude overheard Emra complain to others that: this ex-husband took the coupon that was distributed on her name, which he refuses to give to her now. She says she will go to police because this is theft.

When we are eating and people pass by, Gertrude says “karibu” also when we pass people who are cooking or eating, but is always declined, saying “ndakhuta” I am full, or just no.

Chikondi also said today, about not having bought fertilizer yet, that people with wage jobs also have to wait till end of month before they can buy their fertilizer.

Nelia’s husband went to Kasungu when a car came here to find people to work there on tobacco fields. He recently called her to say he sent money for fertilizer to somebody living in Liwonde. Nelia went there to pick up the money and will buy fertilizer tomorrow, started staying at husbands village because his grandmother is just alone there.

Fatima came to knit again,(said her MIL Elube received blanket from son in SA via brother). Naima (daughter of Balakasi), came back with hat and shoes that Gertrude made for her daughter because
they were too small. Stayed to chat, complained that because of the late rains many people go to bed without having eaten ndiwo (but do have nsima). And [Naima] complained about prospect of us going back to Lilongwe while they have gotten used to come chat at our house.

Esnart passed by with tin of water on head and pail of water on daughter’s head, saying that she now had the missing 100mk to pay for the jersey (300mk total). Her husband had given money to brother of Elube who arrived from SA a few days ago.

Jens Anderson: what kind of jobs do these men in SA? Do they live very cheaply (zuining) to channel as much money and items as possible back to Malawi? Do they have sexual relations there? How do they manage to bring so many items back with them to Malawi? Gertrude thinks all from Mudzi B in same house.

Received text from Marjolein, Hazel is in big brother finale! Is thought to stand a chance, because although generally considered boring, is seen as the only one with morals, oh wow, that would be so great for her! And for Malawi, can be very proud…. Must tell Feye to gather a big Dutch voting force!

Ellesi, only child of Jeneti (we thought before that her name was Modesta, but Modesta is daughter of Auleria, who lives with mother Thandizo), came by in afternoon on brand new mountain bike (on which somebody had written “Jackson”). Her uncle, brother of Elube and probably also Jeneti, bought it for her from SA. But if she not finishes her secondary education, she has to give it back.

Almost each day (if not each indeed) a group of singing kids comes back to village in late afternoon, having played netball somewhere. Jasmine reprimanded her granddaughter after coming back that she does do good at netball, but didn’t pass school. At kids have holiday now, up till beginning of January.

In afternoon, sitting on mat in front of house to be out of the smoke of Livia’s burning fire, Gertrude overheard the husband of Nyamwale talking with a friend under a tree nearby. The husband, Jeremiah, was complaining about his son who was suddenly found to have impregnated a girl who now came to live with him (sent by her mother) and with whom he has decided to marry and thus stop school. The friend said he didn’t understand why the boy hasn’t denied the child is his. Neither did Jeremiah, he should have, school fees were ready for him! Tomorrow the ankhoswe will come for the ceremony but Jeremiah will not be present as a witness to show his protest/disagreement. Ceremony will still take place though, also if father is present.

The GVH has about 4 sons in SA, said Fatima. SO must surely have received something through brother of Elube too. Indeed she walked by, coming from Jasmine’s compound, with a mat (g thinks Jasmine’s husband make mats), some soap and a bottle of lotion passing by to greet us with her hands fall.
In evening, dark, moon behind thick layer of clouds, the husband of Amila shows up at our veranda, saying that he needs a smoke (fodya). Asks whether we can bring us firewood from his field for 50mk. We agree, better to have as much firewood as possible before wet season starts. Then pleads if we can give him 5 or 10 MK advance, because he really needs his smoke tonight, otherwise can’t sleep.

A cigarette, probably buying at Jasmine’s husband, costs 5mk, at least he is not lying about it, says Gertrude by saying that they have no food.

Gertrude closed another carrier for water bottle, this one for the grandson of GVH. In evening someone passed by and shouted to Gertrude that everybody at the football field (he or she was coming back from watching match) how wants one. Innocent and Lizzie have already been learning how to make them.

Tuesday Nov 18

Many people working fields this morning (may be because people have been receiving money from SA and can hire ganyu now?): Kondwani and kids behind us, GVH + husband+ Salika (mainly resting at veranda of little house next to ours though…) on field between our house and Rosemary’s, at a distance other people, young men. Some rain in morning, prompting Alma to start planting too. But she stopped when rains stopped quickly. Clouds remained though so still now (10am), we so Amila with kids working on her field, which is quite big and a bit low, so very black instead of sandy brown, with banana trees. Seems very fertile field, but may be problem of flooding. Also at borehole few people, leading Gertrude to conclude that many are taking advantage of the clouds and working on the fields.

When we passed by Julia’s house few days ago, saw big stack of small cut firewood sticks, we asked they answered that husband sells.

Went to [tiny crossroads market] (grocery) for pictures and follow up questions of BS women we interviewed earlier, but found only Lucia, not selling mandasi today because she had been working at field. Asked her whether she not want to get married. Not yet, she said, needs to help mother taking care of all younger siblings. Men have proposed, but she declines, not, first wait for younger siblings to be bit older. Mother is also taking care, but sometimes goes away. Sibling born after Lucia still at school, 18yrs.

Saw a paper on tree with printed on it “vacancy” G4S is urgently recruiting guards. Need people with JCE certificate at least, and a letter from village headman. Women are especially encouraged to apply. In English! Asked some people about it, whether many had already been applying. Not yet, recruitment is on 20th but many want to go. You too? I asked Zione (mandasi), ah no, said the men
around her: one needs at least JCE certificate (plus at least 2yrs)

0910  On way back from grocery (where a little shop is selling the same thread that Gertrude has been buying from Balaka via Livia, Jane and Jasmine’s grandson for 85mk, while Jane and Jasmine’s grandson had said they paid 100mk per ball. Gertrude told boy at shop (pouring cooking oil in small plastic bags, size of finger) that she wants blue, black and white, he said they will have it on Saturday), passed by Lizzie who just came back from borehole with relative, says there was no particular reason for allowing her husband when he proposed, just decided to agree. Has never asked his age, he [husband Lizzie] found the money to travel to S through his clothes selling BS in Lilongwe. She gave us more mango’s straight from tree, said that people can at least be eating mango’s with the current lack to ndiwo.

0911  Continued to Lizzie’s grandmother (Alma) to buy groundnuts. When Alma heard I had been working on the field, she said I shouldn’t be doing that, leave those problems to them. I should at least wait till rains have made soil a bit s. told her I want to understand those problems, by doing as they are doing. Says many people are buying g/nuts of her these days, to plant. [Alma] Said that these g/nuts are her husband, help find the things she needs.

0912  In morning, at borehole, Amila apologized to Gertrude for her husband coming begging at our porch yesterday. No problem, said Gertrude, as I told you, said Amila, he always starts to behave strange when moon is on this side. (now declining in size).

Back  Alma, when I asked whether she as long time single woman had encountered problems with suspicion of other married women, said that putting on nice clothes does evoke suspicion in people about you sleeping around.

Back  When she does not have enough fertilizer put manure on top of her ridges before the rains start. Received a coupon, sold maize and g/nuts to find money, but daughter borrowed it, but will pay back and then she will buy fertilizer.

Back  Rashida says she did receive a coupon, a whole one even, for 2 bags. Borrowed money to buy now, because the ADMARC at [nearest tradingcenter] will soon stop selling fertilizer to start selling maize, so people can eat. Those who still want to buy fertilizer need to go to Balaka to get it then. Transport costs much higher: 200mk, or even 300mk in rainy season, while from [nearest tradingcenter] 100mk. At ADMARC have to pay 50mk for lifting the bag from store room to bike. This is first year that fertilizer is being sold at [nearest tradingcenter], before everybody had to go to Balaka.

0916  Lizzie went on Sunday to buy fertilizer, and yesterday again to get her hair braided at 50mk. Couldn’t do that on Sunday because many people were waiting to buy fertilizer, no time left to get hair done. Gertrude told her she expects many customers and will send some through to her, but Lizzie thinks they will not allow, as she is still learning.
This morning a woman passed by which we may have interviewed at [small crossroads market], had familiar face. Sold “Chinese” green leaves, at 2 for 5mk! It’s getting more and more expensive.

Are people allowed to sell maize this year, (no, yet still do, says Gertrude) or only through ADMARC? At 52mk/kg, (higher than Lozi Nola’s price), if I remember well. (yes, says Gertrude).

Jasmine’s HH having ceremony to remember death of Innocent’s older sister. Innocent came to invite Gertrude, as they are cooking for many people there now, Gertrude declined, saying her church does not allow participation in such ceremonies. Ok, no problem, said Innocent and left again, in the rain with umbrella, it seems to have started now!

Balakasi’s daughter Naima, yesterday said that people speculated that the rains were being kept from starting by the muslims who are building a mosque half way from here to [small crossroads market], so they have time to put a roof on, bad people. In evening killed big scorpion with brick in front of khonde [veranda].

Nov 19 Wednesday  PLANTED!

We have planted maize and beans together: 3 local maize seeds + 2 beans per phando. About 1 yard (1 step) apart, + 75-90cm? On one ridge planted potatoes in small cirhels: only one ridge because Gertrude doesn’t know whether they will do well in the hot Balaka, are mainly grown in cool, Dedza. On the other side of the house, in front of the toilet and bafa, we have enlarged our vegetable bed where Gertrude had already planted pumpkin (and watered twice a day), for it’s leaves. Now also planted spinach and tomatoes, (a lot of goats dung on these places) and in between more beans. When Rashida passed by, I asked whether she had also planted, but has no seeds yet, she answered. Her fertilizer she bought with borrowed money, which she will pay back after they receive money from orphan care.

Then we went to have a look at field on other side of road, where Jasmine, husband and Innocent and Jasmine’s granddaughter were planting local maize, 3 seeds per phando, about 50cm apart, will also plant mseula in between the maize phando’s, but only here and there, because it grows very big.

Gave us a handful of mseula seeds too. Later, when maize is some high centimetres high, she will plant g/nuts in between all maize miphando. On that field, about 2 acres, she grew cotton last year, but this yr will grow more maize than cotton. Because cotton does bring in a lot of money, but only once. Got into trouble this yr because they didn’t have enough maize. Planted her hybrid seeds first, (5kg, which comes together with the subsidized fertilizer for 800mk, because it is early maturing. Didn’t plant more hybrid maize because of “chuma” costs about 1000mk per 10 kg.

Naima passed by, will get visitors today, therefore on her way to buy a chicken.
Many if not most women’s BSs seem of temporary nature, merchandise changes.

Fatima and husband have not planted today, first have to finish making ridges, will plant tomorrow. At 10 she comes to knit though but it’s not hot (clouds and showers), may be husband is working on the field.

Two young girls passing by, about 10yrs, with water on head, discuss which is better when your mother asks you to choose make ridges or plant, one says ridges, other says planting, which she can do as quick as a car.

Young daughter of Molly came to tell us that her mother had been to Balaka and has nice tomatoes for sale. Three small tomatoes for 20mk! That means people will not be buying tomatoes, said Gertrude, too expensive. Molly has thus become a real BS woman now, I said, yes, may be her husband gave her a lot of money, was Gertrude’s first reaction.

Learned to cook nsima today, (as I have blisters on my feet and most people are busy planting on their fields anyway, so little to do). Bring water to boil, add few hands of ufa while stirring, then leave for 10-15 minutes on hot fire. Add some more hands of ufa while stirring hard, then another few minutes on fire and ready, when using mgaia need to add more flour for some density (but when grinding etc use less maize to make mgaia than gramill or woyera, between gramill and ufa woyera no price difference, but mgaia is cheaper. Buy 20kg gramill we paid 2770mk in shoprite, same amount of mgaia would then have costed about 2000mk, while woyera 3000mk. Mgaia is cheaper because it is only grinded, paying only once at chigayo (Gertrude paid 50mk to grind 1 bucket of maize). For gramill and ufa woyera one also needs to pay the same amount for the other machine, to make ufa. For gramill this is done at same time, while for ufa woyera the mgaia is kept for a few days before making it into ufa, then it becomes very soft ufa.

Read the whole LOVA - publication that I had brought from the Netherlands from A to Z. Put my current struggles in larger academic perspective, should not be afraid of theory, is helpful and enjoyable!

Plan: collect as many interviews with women who have an (independent) income, either through BS or paid job like working in a small grocery store. In NL select some of these women for further in-depth interviews for life history + reasons for choices made. Hopefully that will also shed some more light on questions about how disempowered women are here. Must not forget that Dutch government aim of my study is to advise them on how HIV can be improved.

Rosemary reprimanded one of her younger daughters for trying to throw/beat mango’s out of one of the mango trees at some distance of their house. You act as if you didn’t eat nsima, come back home now!

Gertrude says that as muslims wedding ceremonies the wife is advised to always allow her husband when he wants to have sex, and also in general just always do what he wants, ask about wedding ceremony to some of
Few people in village in afternoon. Innocent said most planted on that nearby fields (in village) in morning and now in afternoon are planting on their fields that are some more distance. In afternoon Sofia passed in front of house to plant too, crying child following her because she didn't want to take it, not much later she came back with baby wrapped on back and another child on her shoulder. Innocent walking behind her carrying 2 kids in the same way, shouting to us that the children were given them too much trouble to be planting, they better sell them. Ja, shouted Gertrude back, to make ndiwo out of them! They did well coming back because little later heavy rain.

Nov 20

GVH’s husband planting a bag full of red painted maize seeds on field behind our bafa.

The grandson of GVH who does ganyu on field north of our house is still making ridges in morning, but said to husband of GVH that he will not continue today because wants to plant on own field.

Chisoni is also planting. Gertrude saw. Rosemary not at home, so maybe planting too. Thokozani + husband first have to finish their ridges, cannot plant yet because husband says police took his coupon after they imprisoned him for 1 night after fighting in line for fertilizer. He and Thokozani and sister Ainessi sat at their small khonde when we came. Thokozani got up to get an empty bag for us to sit on, while husband got up and took his bike from inside (or did Thokozani get it for him?), said he was going to [nearest trading center] to see friends. Thokozani and Ainessi (just visiting) clearly think husband is cheating Thokozani. He had said one day that he had received money building in Balaka and would be buying the fertilizer after work that same day. Didn’t come home, called late in the evening with somebody else phone saying that he was kept at the police station for that fighting in fertilizer line. Next day he came home, saying that the police had taken his coupon, he keeps saying he will go tomorrow, she plans to follow him, see what is true of the story, or otherwise will go to his builders colleagues and ask what really happened.

Sister Ainessi comments that if he would really have been arrested, they would have charged him 300/400 mk, story can’t be true. Friends say, they add, that he has been kumowa, buying beer after selling their coupon. Thokozani said they will then have to grow cotton only, because the soil here is not fertile enough to grow maize without fertilizer, will not grow higher than 50cm. husband agreed to this plan, she interprets as proof of his cheating her, because why agree if it is true what he says that he will get the coupon at the police station and buy? They are sharing their coupon with the grandson of GVH who works on field north of our house. That one came to ask for it, wanting to buy his fertilizer. Levison answered that he will get it later, that the coupon is currently too far, cannot got it right now.

Sister Ainessi hasn’t planted yet either, still busy making ridges at the field where she is staying now. GVH passed by, with half the bag with red seeds still full, hoe and bowl on head. Ainessi asked her to
give her some seeds. GVH told her to go and ask her friend (Emra) for seeds, since they share husband now. Gertrude expected Ainessi to get upset about this comment, but just laughed, saying that: Emra doesn’t have either, they are both looking at the same husband to support them.

When registering for coupons, people were already told that there were not enough for everyone, that each had to choose someone to register together with, to be sharing with.

Thokozani eat yesterday: mangos in morning, lunch nsima + matemba, dinner nsima + cassava leaves.

At Emra the radio was on loud, a lecture/add about HIV/AIDS, urging girls not to be attracted to those men with vehicles, just to get money. I heard “chiwerere ayi”. The last part Gertrude couldn’t understand because in chiyao, radio I slam. Emra seemed fine, nsima was on fire, with leaves to be prepared for ndiwo. Indeed a wound on head, there were others have no hair but thick skin from carrying water. She is planting local maize now with nandolo, both kept, has no fertilizer: ex-husband took their coupon, says he will come to discuss about it, but hasn’t still, so now he just started to plant. Doesn’t know how to solve if fertilizer doesn’t come through. Can’t you go and collect all the goat dropping everywhere? (or even send children to go and collect everywhere), ah, wouldn’t be enough, she said fatalistically. Will still plant cotton and g/nuts (will buy g/nuts seeds). Yesterday ate nothing in morning, nsima & masamba, she collected in the bush for lunch and dinner. The maize for this nsima, she has bought with money “that somebody has given her”, maybe Ainessi’s husband?

Fissa (woman who had husband from Zambia) has started planting, but not finished yet. Local maize (4 seeds per phando) together with 2 pumpkin seeds, in between these phando, a phando with 2 nandolo seeds. Later will also plant g/nuts, 1 seed per phando. Received these seeds from her mother, bought fertilizer already, after selling a goat, will apply after 1 month, will mix both types because they are mixed in a bag (shares with daughter-in-law Chisoni). Says she has never tried applying separately, everybody mixes. Yesterday eat mango in the morning, for lunch and dinner nsima with leaves, she collected in bush because “ndiwo zikusowa”. Has nice house, I noticed again, and quite a professional livestock khola behind house, of bricks with small door. Daughter-in-law Chisoni was planting on her own field, in own village where she will move to later (K. village, if I remember well), went together with Fissa to buy fertilizer (probably with money sent by husband from SA) and they eat together, so ate same as Fissa yesterday.

Tumanene (hair half un braided, cutting downsides of mangos), in house I saw a chair and a small table with a crocheted tablecloth. Started planting, not finished yet: local maize (3/4 seeds) together with pumpkin (2/3 seeds per phando), on same field nandolo (3 seeds) kept maize seeds for planting. In other field will plant cotton and g/nuts (will buy seeds in village). hasn’t bought fertilizer yet, “there is still time”. Has coupon and money which was sent by husband from SA. Yesterday ate phala in morning, nsima with matemba for lunch and nsima with piln (masamba) for dinner plus mangos all day through. Has not bought maize yet, still eating from what she harvested. In 3 months will plant sweet potatoes.
Ayama (old woman) started planting today, not finished yet: local maize (3 seeds, kept but will also buy more) with 2 pumpkin seeds (kept), in same phando, in between these phando, nandolo (3 seeds, bought at grocery /tiny crossroads market] village). After this will plant mtendeza and khobwe together in same field, seeds bought in Balaka where she went herself and also bought extra pumpkin seeds because found that these were finished in [nearest tradingcenter], will also plant cotton, will receive both the seeds + chemicals at [small crossroads market], pay back when selling harvest. Bought 1 bag of fertilizer (sharing coupon with Blessings), did ganyu to find money, ate nothing yesterday morning; nsima with cassava leaves for lunch and mango in evening because ndiwo was lacking. When we almost finished the interview a new male face came angry, saying we were keeping her from her responsibilities, she better put some water for him to wash. Gertrude stayed very calm, saying we were almost finished. Ellesi joined us while talking to grandmother Ayami. [NB man who recently came from SA is her son! Probably found many through him. Find that quite a number of women were still at their fields although we intentionally started late, at 10am.

Chief Mudzi B had started planting today, not finished yet: local maize (3/4) (bought in village because had finished own), together with 3 nandolo and 2/3 pumpkin seeds. Will later plant hybrid maize (received when buying fertilizer) and cotton (will get these later). Bought fertilizer with ganyu money, yesterday ate only phala (breakfast and lunch) and mangos for dinner, lacking ndiwo.

Thandizo (sitting at khonde with granddaughters, 1 knitting!) said she hadn’t planted yet, because she is not getting better (when we left I said “muchire msanga” [get better soon], Ah! She answered, if you give me the medicine, has been to hospital, was given medication, she says). Daughter did plant on own field, will plant maize, nandolo, sorghum, pumpkin - all seeds kept. Bought fertilizer already (we saw when we came to interview her daughter), sold “something” in order to find money. Gertrude said we couldn’t probe because she had deliberately been vague. Yesterday ate mango in morning, and nsima with nandolo in afternoon and evening. In afternoon also more mango, nsima made of bought maize.

Nola seems to be doing very fine. All people eating matemba yesterday had bought these from her, she herself ate pig meat yesterday, and a newly bought goat was tied to tree to keep it from running back to where it came from. husband sat at khonde while we sat on sand under tree. They have started planting local maize (3, because some may contain weevils) together with 1 pumpkin seed & 2/3 nandolo seeds, also planted rice, saying soil is ok for that, can harvest about 4 bags, will still plant hybrid maize (1 per phando), g/nuts and cotton, except for cotton kept all seeds for planting. Somebody is collecting her cotton seeds today at [small crossroads market]; bought fertilizer with money from selling the pigs of pig club, will apply in December, after weeding. The two types mixed at once because they have a big field, would not be enough if she applied separately twice. Yesterday had phala for breakfast, nsima with pig meat for lunch and dinner. Nsima still from own harvest, differences between past and now: In past people stayed in their marriage for a long time, while nowadays girls just get married whenever a man proposes, without even informing their parents. Leading to problems in the family, divorces and then remarry again with another… In the past girls were advised by their parents and grandparents, and they listened to what they were told. Nowadays girls say there is “freedom” ufulu = freedom, liberty, right), and that they can behave as they like don’t listen. Doesn’t know herself why this has changed, doesn’t understand. Granddaughter Grace supposedly staying with uncle in Mzuzu but Nola hasn’t heard from her foe long time. Aunt is now visiting relatives in [tiny crossroads market],
so Nola will go there to ask about Grace.

Venesi Tunga (together with sister Pamela tearing of the wings of some type of insects, looks like wasp, yellow lower part of body, rest black. Don’t sting. At least people are already finding some ndiwo now through rains, commented Gertrude later). Has started planting, not finished yet, put 3 local maize seeds (bought), 2/3 nandolo (kept), 2/3 khobwe (bought) and 2 pumpkin seeds (kept), in 1 phando, will also plant hybrid maize and cotton. No g/nuts, because she has no seeds, she adds. Bought fertilizer [Venesi] with MASAF money, will apply both types separately, one just after germination, because one is for better germination, other for high yields. Says that most other people either don’t know that the 2 types have different purposes or they are lazy. Shared her coupon with Pamela, yesterday had mango for breakfast, nsima with matemba for lunch and dinner. Bought the matemba from Nola.

Pamela planted 3 maize (bought in village) + 2 pumpkin + 3 nandolo and 3 mseula seeds, all mixed. Also planted cassava, begged some of the seeds from friends, will also plant cotton, mtedza and nzama, but last 2 only if she can find money to buy seeds. Bought fertilizer with money that her brother sent from SA, (laughs somewhat besmuikt). Yesterday ate phala and mango in morning, and nsima with matemba for lunch and dinner. Today they will eat the zirombo that they are clearing from their wings (most still alive, although they don’t fly away, because of heat, says Gertrude), will just fry then without oil and add some salt.

Dora (mother of Dorica, in pink dress with hole where 1 breast hangs from) cleaning plates to be eating nsima with the same insects as the Tunga sisters. Started planting, hasn’t finished yet: ¾ maize seeds (kept) with 3 pumpkin seeds (bought in village). later will plant nandolo at the end of all ridges, as a fence around field, will buy her fertilizer on Monday, shares coupon with Hilda. Found money through her son who did ganyu in [small crossroads market], will mix the 2 types, if she had the whole coupon to herself, it would be possible to apply the types separately, everywhere twice. But now has to mix them to have enough for the whole field. In morning ate phala, for lunch nsima with nandolo plus mango and for dinner nsima with nandolo, actually mango all through out the day. Has now started buying maize for food, kept last bit of her own harvest for planting

Hilda had just come from the field, when we passed by earlier found only her husband, telling wife was at field. Planted (not finished yet) 3 maize seeds (some kept, some bought with 3 pumpkin seeds (kept). At end of each ridge (kept) nandolo seeds, and mseula separately, 2 seeds per phando. Will also plant hybrid maize (2/phando) because field is not big enough. Last yr people also received 5kg of hybrid maize seed, which would normally cost 400mk, shares coupon with Dora, found money through MASAF, will mix because otherwise not enough. Yesterday ate mango in morning, nsima with matemba for lunch and dinner, and at 4pm mango. Today will find some leaves from bush for ndiwo.

Evelin Tunga is also taking wings from the same zirombo. Has started planting, but not finished: 3 maize + 2 nandolo + 2 pumpkin seeds (all kept + received from friends) in 1 phando. Bought
fertilizer, sharing with someone from her church. Found money through ganyu. Will apply the types together, doesn’t know why, sees everybody around her do like that, will not be enough otherwise she then says. Ate yesterday mango in morning, nsima + nandolo for lunch but no dinner by lack of ndiwo. Today will eat the zimombo as ndiwo. Says she has not been proposed since husband divorced in 2006 (sanabwere). Wouldn’t want get married either, still remembering the bad behaviour of his relatives who came to take all their properties after he died. The advantage of being alone is that: no one is commanding her; “palibe wina amene amandiuza kuti chitani izi”. Disadvantage is that: she has to do ganyu alone, and if she would do a BS no husband to help her. Have you finished asking questions now, she asks me, or will you keep coming back? Ah! I will be coming and coming! Told her already before that she should feel free to come and ask me everything she wants to know too, which Livia did, but she hasn’t. Then she asked Gertrude price of knitted shoes, Gertrude said she can also come to us and make them herself, instead of just staying (home). Giggles a lot, nice girl, beautiful young woman, strange if it is true that she has not been proposed, light shinned. Gertrude says people don’t like light skin, very dark neither, in between.

Molly finished planting today, together with husband: 3 (kept) chimanga seeds + ½ nandolo + (kept) pumpkin + khobwe (bought at [nearest tradingcenter]) all mixed, will now start making ridges for cotton and hybrid maize. [Molly] Bought fertilizer with money from her new tomato BS. Will apply the 2 types of fertilizer mixed, for it to be enough for whole field. Ate yesterday mango in morning, for lunch and dinner nsima with masamba.

Molly Started her tomato BS in October last month. She decided, husband gave money and goes weekly to Ntcheu on bike to buy 1500mk of tomatoes, sells in about a week, 300mk profit. Wanted to start because sometimes people pass by selling things but she can’t be moving up and down to husband at grocery to ask some money, up until now only used profit to buy fertilizer. husband’s income they keep, sells at grocery and other days at home (nice small coffee table at veranda with piles of tomatoes). Sells much more at grocery but today went to chigayo, then worked on the field and is now too tired to go to grocery.

Mother of chief Mudzi B planted at lunch hour. After lunch, quarter to 4, husband of GVH also planting again.

Jeneti we found coming back from field with firewood at 4pm, started planting but hasn’t finished; 4 maize seeds, in mapando also maungu, and planted also khobwe, all kept seeds. Will later plant nandolo, and elsewhere cotton + mseula together because the cotton chemicals also help against nseula diseases. Jeneti Bought 1 bag of fertilizer, sharing with Tumanene, with money she found through selling maize. Tumanene has the 2kg (TWO) of hybrid maize that came with the fertilizer, will give Anne later, if the fertilizer is wochepa, apply mix, applying when maize is knee high. Ate yesterday mango in morning, for lunch and dinner nsima with khobwe and masamba. Nsima still from own harvest, masamba bought at Balaka where she went to hospital.

Auleria (daughter of Thandizo) started planting today; 3 maize seeds + 3 pumpkin seeds in 1 phando. Nandolo (3/phando) at end of ridges (because big roots can destroy maize). Bought all these seeds in past, since then has kept then each yr, will later also plant tomato (kept seeds). [Auleria] Bought fertilizer, like mother [Thandizo] she mysteriously says she sold ‘something’ in order to find money. When I ask specifically whether she found it through her zigumu/zitumbuwa BS, she said
no, will apply the fertilizer mixed (to make it enough for 1 acre) when they are knee high (touching knees). Yesterday only ate mango in morning and masana, nothing in evening because ndiwo is lacking. When I said that other people go into bush to find masamba or zirombo, she laughs, says she doesn’t eat zirombo, one yr many people got sores in their stomachs because of them, but today at least she ate nsima with pumpkin leaves. Some relatives, boys, had been doing ganyu and brought this back.

Esnart planted 3 local maize seeds (bought) + 3 pumpkin (kept) + 2 mphonda (kept, type of pumpkin) together in 1 phando, and 3 nandolo/phando separately (bought). Will later plant g/nuts + nzama if she finds money to buy seeds. [Esnart] Bought fertilizer with money that her husband sent, shared coupon with Mphatso, daughter of Rosemary, who hasn’t bought her fertilizer yet, so they haven’t received the 2kg maize seeds. Will share the fertilizer when maize is knee high. Applies separately the 2 types of fertilizer; 1 at knee level, other when higher. She has a small field, half a bag of each variety will be enough for whole field. Yesterday ate mango in morning, and nsima with nandolo for lunch and dinner. Nsimas maize bought.

Hb [of Esnart] left to SA in 2004, came back in Oct 2006 till Jan 2007, and says he will be coming back again soon, temporarily, but hasn’t told her for how long. Says now she is born in another village in Balaka not Mudzi B as said during interviews (which corresponds better to her saying that people steal from her here because she is not from here). Gertrude apologized for all our questions, Esnart said: Ah no, it is your job.

Elube was sitting under tree infront of her house with Lovely, some children and bachelor man in chair. Another young man was in the bafà, telling me I was very welcome in English, everybody laughed. Lovely was playing bawo. They felt free to talk to me. Bachelor asked where I was from + what research was about, disappointed that I was especially interested in women, he would have liked to tell me about the problems of his bicycle.

Elube started planting (saw her in her field at 1pm, took picture): hybrid maize (2 per phando), and g/nuts (1/ph). Local maize (3) + nandolo (3) + pumpkin (2) all together in 1 phando. Not finished yet, will later also plant cotton at her field at Misowali and mseula. All seeds she just bought at Balaka, ate them because ndiwo was lacking. [Elube] Went for ganyu to find the money. Bought 1 bag of fertilizer, sharing with daughter-in-law Fatima. Borrowed money from Lovely, will pay back after doing ganyu, says she received nothing from her brother coming back from SA, not 1 tambala, nor from her son, are they fighting? No. Not even soap, she kept repeating, “olo sopo”. Yesterday ate only mango, today too, does look skinny and underfed, but Fatima claims that magret received money and at least a blanket from SA, strange.

Lovely then said we could interview her too while there, has planted local maize (kept, ¾) + 2/3 pumpkin seeds (kept) in 1 phando. Nandolo (3, kept) at end of ridges. Mtedza wofira = (67, bought at Balaka, are early maturing + high yielding, 1/phando. But also will plant chalimbana, just following what parents are doing, + cotton, mseula, hybrid maize and sweet potato. [Lovely] Sold maize to buy fertilizer, sharing coupon with sister Blessings. Will also buy another bag of fertilizer and apply the types separately because the soil is not fertile here, and will have enough for whole field. People including her, first plant local maize before hybrid, because hybrid is early maturing, while local needs more rain. Yesterday ate mango in morning, nsima with masamba from tchire (bush) for lunch.
and phala for dinner because lacking ndiwo. [Lovely] Did not receive anything from husband via magrets’s brother because he left without saying goodbye to husband, but will receive in December, when Esnart’s husband comes.

0970 Innocent sat in front of Jasmine's house with youngest child and Dorica who was knitting. Planted maize, pumpkin, nandolo maseula, mawere and mtedza at mother’s field. At her field not planted yet, not today because Jasmine went to [small crossroads market] to sell zigumu & bread. Waiting for mother to do work quick together, will maize, nandolo, cotton, tomatoes and chitowe (to put in ndiwo like g/nuts). No pumpkins because thieves tend to steal from her field. Still has to buy maize and nandolo seeds. Will borrow money from father because has to plant soon. Will buy at Magda, has not bought fertilizer yet, sharing coupon with mother. Has no money, zili kutali. Will borrow money to buy fertilizer. Plans to apply the fertilizer separately, the first one half way, to make it grow quickly, second one to get big cobs. Yesterday ate nothing in morning, mango at noon, nsima with pumpkin leaves in evening, together with parents. Mother bought the leaves from someone passing by.

0971 Gertrude went around to ask if we can borrow bicycles to go to [nearest tradingcenter], because of my blisters. Bike of Innocent’s father is being used by son for BS, will be back on Saturday. GVH said bike is not her’s and will some payment for it. Dorica also said it is difficult to borrow a bike without paying something for it, told about someone in village who has bike for BS, rents out for 70mk going, 70mk returning. Will ask and come to tell us later. Gertrude told GVH we are just asking people what they are planting, afraid that she would get angry again.

0972 Thandizo has 2 granddaughters, spending their holiday from secondary school with her. One stays with relatives in Blantyre, other in K. village, going to school at [large commercial estate]. Strange to come to place where food is lacking, would they have brought anything to reduce pressure on grandmother’s HH at least, two full grown extra eaters?

0973 Tinenenji was also knitting when we came to interview Auleria. When asked whether she has planted already, said she also has no field. They will just do BS and buy their food, yeah right. Probably just didn’t feel like answering my questions.

0974 Not getting into the friend relationships that I had in gutemala, not at all, mainly because of language, all chatting goes to Gertrude. And maybe people feel that I’d rather not be here.

0975 When asking people what they ate yesterday, they all first have to laugh. Then say “nsima” or “nothing” (and chief Mudzi B said phala). Have to ask specifically what they ate in morning, masana and madzulo, and what kind of ndiwo they ate with their nsima. Lack of ndiwo is much bigger problem than lack of maize, it seems. Only few said they didn’t ate nsima: chief Mudzi B ate phala because lacking ndiwo, Elube says she only ate mangos, but I have difficulty behaving her; her own brother just came from SA, where her son also works and she claims she did not receive anything while DIL Fatima told Gertrude that Elube received a blanket, and me that only Elube received money, and not themselves (while Innocent had said to Gertrude that Fatima told her she was happy because she received some money from SA), Auleria said she only ate mangos yesterday, while the mother with whom she lives said she ate nsima with nandolo twice yesterday. But Aurelia did say that at least
today she ate nsima because related boys brought pumpkin leaves after doing ganyu. I must ask “why” next time someone tells me she doesn’t eat nsima, may be Aurelia was selling her zigumu somewhere but although she said in interview she had stopped now to be working on her land.

Gertrude asked grandson GVH to build a small fence around veggie garden, which he will do in exchange for bottle bag she crocheted for him. I asked her whether we cannot do it ourselves; we could try if we had tree, she answered. She has seen her mother make a new fence every year, even though it is obviously a man’s job. Indeed, she would work on the fence mainly at dawn, to avoid the many comments from men passing by, asking her whether she wanted to deprive them of their tasks/jobs/responsibilities, complaining. She would reply that she has no husband, and no money to pay for one to do it for her, so they shouldn’t be complaining. Gertrude had boiled mangos for breakfast, and said verheugd that they were very good, just like pumpkin, will fill stomach just like pumpkin.

Nov 21 Friday.

Grandson of GVH came in dark to say that he won’t be needing his bike so we can borrow without problem. Don’t even have to pay, it’s his, so he can decide. If GVH asks, we should just tell her that; that is between us and him, very kind. Dorica came to say that husband of Tinenenji is indeed willing to take one of us there for 70mk, so we left after breakfast, at about 7am. On bike to [nearest tradingcenter] is not too far at all. Passed by Eveles’s husband to ask if he still have that bike he made himself from all different parts. Unfortunately sold already in Balaka. I liked that one, but he is making a new one now, says it will be ready by Sunday (saw him go to [nearest tradingcenter] on our way back. Costs 2500mk, but get discount! He answered when we were about to leave, said it was beautiful to see me on bike. On way back also Fatima shouted surprised that she didn’t know I could cycle. Then for coming 2 months Gertrude has a bike, can do some more interviews, and I can order other bike to be ready in Feb, unless we don’t stay here. Well, should at least partly stay here, to follow up on all lives here. Where can we bike to? [nearest tradingcenter], maybe Balaka, Liwawadzi, lake. Yes, definitely, I will increase our radius substantially, for only 40 Euro per bike!, and it would help Eveles’s HH a lot, I am sure.

Instead of more rain, it is getting hot again, worrisome. Last rains in afternoon of 19th, and no sign of any coming now.

On way to [nearest tradingcenter] saw Thokozani + husband planting! On field near Eveles.

In [nearest tradingcenter] first went to hospital, spoke to very young officer in charge. Wanted to see identification, was satisfied when showed him my business card. Introduced me to Mr Mavuto, the HIV/AIDS counsellor who took us to his office. Had a soft carton paper binder keeping his records together. VCT is available since 2007 at [nearest tradingcenter] hospital. Staff is trained by Goal Malawi, saw tables carried name of this org. testing kits come from the ministry of health. In the past quarter year, July +/-m, sept 2008 657 people have been tested here: 72 men, 120 non-pregnant women 465 pregnant women. He said that all pregnant women get tested and are willing to hear their results immediately.
Of the 72 men, 17 were found positive (+_ 25%!), of the 120 non-pregnant women, 26 were positive (+_ 20%) and of the 465 pregnant women 53 were positive (+_ 12%). For receiving ARV’S people have to go to Balaka, other nearby VCT centres are at XXX, [large commercial estate] and XXX. To those interested both male and female, condoms are distributed. Men always choose male condoms and only some women choose female condoms. Keeps record of the date, sex, age, village of those who take condoms, and how many they request (5/10/20/40), but has not aggregated these data. I saw that some days none, other days a few people take them, both men and women. A nurse Ms Joshua joined us and told us that the birth control options offered are injections (every 3 months), pills (give for 3 months) and condoms (each month 20). Something else will start, a nurse is now being trained for it, but doesn’t remember the name, gestures an injection in elbow. Says yes when I ask whether it is an implant, but doesn’t sound sure. Injections are preferred by most client, either because they are afraid to be forgetting a pill, other say that their husbands don’t allow and like this he can’t find out. All these are free of charge. Says that most babies are born in Aug - Oct and Dec - march, meaning most baby’s are made Nov - Jan and March - June, indeed what I expected! In hunger season + cotton selling season. Will need real numbers though people can come to [nearest trading center] hospital with all their complaints, whatever cannot be solved here, is send to Balaka.

Waiting rooms are just outside spaces with cement benches and roof, very publicly visible. Here at least this hospital had it’s own compound, but the clinic at C. village was just beside road, at some small distance, but still, could have made open wall to waiting room on one of the three other sides not facing the road.

Bike had no lock, just placed somewhere against wall, all bikes look alike, none locked. While interviewing BS women/women with own income, we take the bike all the time, putting it at a place where we can keep an eye on it. In the market, quite a hassle. If indeed I want to have own bike, then at least with a lock so we can just leave it somewhere. Bike taxi much cheaper of course though, paid 70mk going (down hill), go coming back for 1600mk one can make many bike taxi trips.

Asked nurse Ms Joshua whether we could interview her one day, being a woman with own income. She gave us her telephone 094820XX.

First market women to be interviewed was sitting down beside road with hips of tomatoes, unions and pumpkin seeds. Saw some gray hairs under her head cover, but still looked good, fat. Agreed to be interviewed, people gather around us while talking, we sat next to her on the ground. Bcoz of loud noise from shop behind us, did not use voice recorder.

Chabwinja (47) from [nearest trading center], selling tomatoes, onions and pumpkin seeds. At other times also sells beans and cabbage. This is 5th year of doing BS, her husband had told her to start because of “mavuto”, they worked on the field but without much benefit. Found starting capital when they sold maize after bumper harvest. [BS woman [nearest trading center] Sometimes takes loans from concern universal to continue her BS, has been selling the same merchandise from beginning : tomato, nyemba, cabbage, because they bring in enough profit (kupindula). husband buys once a week at Ntcheu, by car, and then she sell everyday at [nearest trading center]. Buying for 8000mk, making 1500mk-2000mk profit (most women say first their highest profit, then lowest, this 2000-1500mk). Discuss with husband what to use profit for; food for the children, school fees. Can’t remember when she married, but is first have 8 children, together cultivate local + hybrid maize and cotton. Sometimes sell some of their maize, sometimes do ganyu,
and hire when they have enough money. husband just stays, but helps in BS, usually he is the one who
goes to buy in Ntcheu district. Say with 12 people in HH: husband + 8 kids + 2 grandchildren. She
has not been to school, because parents were poor, couldn’t afford school fees. IMPACTS OF BS on
life: before she didn’t have livestock, now has 2 goats, now are able to eat what they want, now have
enough ziwiya, sees no disadvantages to running a BS. Says that only those who have problems start
BS. Others may have the same problems but think they are not able to start a BS, cannot manage.
Then we went into market: small streets of counter shops, and women sitting on porches selling cakes, breads, mandasi, chigumu. Approached women selling mandasi; Akolija (31) from [nearest tradingcenter], only sells mandasi, started last September, she decided because 'ndiwo, basi’, just because ndiwo was lacking at home, because she had only little money to start with ("kuchepa kwa mpamba"). She chose mandasi, since that needs little investment money. She just took the money that her husband had given her to buy ndiwo and instead bought ingredients for mandasi. Makes fresh mandasi 2 x per day, because she doesn’t have enough money to make many at once. Buys ingredients for 450mk, making 100 MK profit, thus 200mk per day, which she uses to buy ndiwo, keeping and spending the money herself. Who ever comes early can choose where to sit, sits at different spot each day. Married in 1995, now first marriage, gave birth to 5 kids between 1997 - 2006, all alive. Stays in HH with 7 (husband+5kids). Found also income through husband’s salary as a teacher. Farm only for food, no cash crops, don’t do, but hire ganyu. Left school in form 2 because of school fees. Impact on life: “ndalama sizikusowa za ndiwo” [money is not lacking for relish]. Disadvantage is that, sometimes people don’t buy much, then she can just buy some ndiwo but no new ingredients. Then she borrows at shop tp start again, buy ingredients for new mandasi. The type of women that start BSs have “ mavuto pakhomo” [problems at home]. Women wish to buy something think of starting a BS to be able to buy that. Knows FINCA, concern universal, Rural finance as org’s that give out loans. Took a loan from FINCA once for a tomato BS, but doesn’t want what anymore, means you can’t eat, you are just paying back the loan. What other type of BS done before?

Continued bit deeper into market, where in between the brick & cement grocery shops stand wooden structures where men and women sell masamba, eggplant, thelere, dried fish, tomato, beans, g/nuts etc. I wanted to interview a woman working in one of the shops, but could first only find Maria, daughter of Alinafe, who indeed confirmed that in most other shops boys were working. Eventually did find 1 woman, in a very small, scarcely stocked shop with goose wife separating her from customers. In goose wire a hole at head light + head size. Iron sheet stocked with soap, Vaseline, batteries, sewing threads, women underwear, some dresses for baby girls, razor, tea, washing powder in small quantities, blades, painkillers, salt and plastic bags.

Alexa was operating the shop, which is hers; since last year. 35 yrs old, from D. village. husband decided she should be running a shop here at [nearest tradingcenter]. They had sold cotton and used money to start, because of “umphawi”. Hasn’t run any other BS before, this is first. husband chose her BS should be a shop because it would give more profit than other types of BSs last year the shop was well stocked, but this year things have become expensive, and they are not able to stock it as well as before. husband goes to Balaka once a month to buy new merchandise, after asking her what is needed at the shop. She goes to the shop everyday of the week, opening at 8am because of distance, until 5pm. Doesn’t know profit, but makes about 100mk, per day, sometimes 200mk. Then buys ndiwo (answers very much time bound!) and goes home.
Married in 1989, now first marriage, but was pregnant once before marrying this man, at school (1986), but the boy denied the child was his. It died just after birth (1988). Just stayed with parents in Blantyre. Current husband was also there, staying with his sister, but from Utale. He proposed marriage to her, she doubted for 2 months, remembering the behaviour of her boyfriend cheating her, saying their baby was not his, but was lacking soap, so decided eventually to agree, to get the things she needed. They are staying well together, have no problems, live in HH with 9: husband+Wife+7 kids. Did tell proposer about the first pregnancy, this yr they have rented a field to grow cotton, to continue BS here. She doesn’t do ganyu, because always working at shop. husband currently works as a guard at a home in [large commercial estate]. He sells in the shop when she is ill, sometimes works on their field.

Impact on life: is now able to buy ndiwo and food. Last yr made a lot of money, this yr BS not going so well. Bought maize, clothes with money of BS last yr, have radio and iron sheets, sleep on mat, sees no disadvantages to running a BS, is now able to buy what she wants, although it is not enough. Mentions Concern, and Rural Finance as org’s that give out loans, but has never taken a loan because she is not making enough profit to be paying back. In D. village their neighbour already has such a shop, therefore couldn’t build one there. Is doing a bit better than her but in village few people buy things, go to [nearest tradingcenter] for that.

Giradi (31) from C. village looks poor (no fat, skin condition, hair, clothes) and sells masamba, just like 3 other women in the shades near her. Started last yr, always masamba but different kinds. Today she sells 3 leaves for 5mk, started because of “kuvutika”, failing to take care of her children. She decided but discussed with her husband. First started with mandasi, but when she felt they didn’t bring her enough profit, she switched to masamba because more people buy these, buys at Luwawadzi, goes there every morning except Sunday (then goes to church). Wakes up at 4am, arriving at [nearest tradingcenter] between 8 and 9, depending on the number of people buying at Luwawadzi. Spends 300 or 400mk buying, selling for over 600mk. These days uses her profit to buy food, and keeps for buying again the next day. Always sells at [nearest tradingcenter], married in 1988 until now is first marriage. Has 6 kids, from 1990-2006, stays in HH with 6; husband+W+4 kids. Other income sources are cotton and husband runs a bike taxi BS. Don’t do or hire ganyu, left school in std 6 because lack of school fees. Impact on life is that before they had to do ganyu, but not anymore, and now are at least able to eat everyday. Before she just stayed at home, doing ganyu, cooking, sometimes doesn’t make profit, then her husband helps with bike taxi money. Some people “amasowa chithandizo pakhomo, but have a husband who doesn’t bring enough money, yet don’t think of starting a BS, don’t know the benefits of BS, while when doing a BS one can find what you want, says you can see from the appearance of a woman whether she runs a BS or not: her body and clothes are well washed with soap, put on lotion. Mentions CIUMU and concern as org’s giving out loans, but is afraid of herself to take a loan (“mantha” [fear]), she just answered to “why?”). afraid that she won’t be making enough profit, and then they will even come at home and take all the profit she has.

Gertrude would like to buy mawere to make thobwa, and we ask the selling woman whether we can interview her. But will I really come back to give her picture? She asks, hesitating, until young man selling dried fish next to her, who Gertrude identifies as the father of Livia’s last born, confirms that I really always come back with the pictures. Alimani (34) from A. village is doing well, has many lits of a dengu (woven grass) in front of her, with mtedza, nyemba, nandolo, khobwe, mawere, colorant, pumpkin seeds, also hips of tomato, potato and onions. At other times also sells thelere (okra), mseula
and nzama. Started in 1997 after her husband died. Did ganyu to find money to start BS with, started with masamba first, because “ndalama zinali zochepa” [too little money]. Later changed to cabbage which she bought at Ntcheu after which she started to make more profit which led to her changing to all these legumes. This season especially people buy a lot of these for planting, but she sells then all year through. For her masamba BS she had to walk to buy then, but now makes enough money to take transport to Ntcheu. Goes once a week, buying for app 10,000mk + 1200mk transport costs. Sells everyday at [nearest tradingcenter], making about 2000mk profit per week, which she uses to buy ndiwo, sugar, clothes for kids.

First marriage from 1988-1996, husband died, married again in 2000-now, because of “mavuto”. Although she was doing BS, she didn’t make enough money to sufficiently feed her children. She didn’t know whether this man would be satisfactorily providing, but maybe, he helps indeed, but gives her money when there is nothing at home. Sometimes he goes to Ntcheu to buy merchandise for her, sometimes gives her money if she lacks to continue her BS. Stays with 8 in HH: husband + W + 5 kids + in-law. husband also earns money, as a teacher, also do ganyu. Stopped school in std 5, when parents died. Impact of BS on life is that: now they are able to eat and buy clothes. Disadvantage is that there is no one at home to take care of the house, has never taken a loan and doesn’t know how to describe the type of women that start BS.

Livia and Chisoni, came to knit, Chisoni said that she hadn’t come for a while because people [Ada] had been teasing her, talking + singing about her here and at borehole. At borehole they had discouraged her saying she can manage to knit, but now she decided to not just stay at home, wants to learn to make some decorations for in the house, so that when her husband comes back (saying “mwamuna wanga”, not his name) from SA, he will see some changes in the house. And the people who teased her have stopped coming, are now just staying at home. Livia told that she also was teased for coming here, at the borehole. Gossips about that she is in chibwenzi with a policeman, who may come to destroy our house while she is nicely chatting with Gertrude. Said she just let them be, and continued coming here, now the talking has stopped. She encouraged Chisoni to do the same, otherwise later she would have to come to Livia if she wants something knitted, and Livia will charge a lot for it! Livia asked Chisoni why she wasn’t pregnant yet. Chisoni answered that she is afraid to be pregnant alone, so waits until he is here for sometime. Livia also asked how they paid for his passport, C answered that his elder brother sent money for it. Chisoni was wearing nice shiny blue slippers with decorations, bought them at 650mk in Balaka when her husband sent money from SA.

When we went out of the market, saw a woman enter “sizowona restaurant”, next to a man with a scale and maize. Followed the woman into the restaurant and found there another woman cutting leaves, the owner.

Anglesi (34) from [nearest tradingcenter]. She started this tearoom and restaurant last June, a decision from husband who left to SA last year, because he may not always be able to send money sufficient for her to take care of her HH of 8 (6 children + her mother). He also choose the type of BS she should run and sent her the money to start with. Two of her children help her in the restaurant, which is open everyday from 6am to 7pm. Said about reason for starting: “ndimavutika kwambiri chifukwa amuna angawo ali kutali” “ali kuti? “kunja” - over there, outside = South Africa. “Iwowo anaganiza kumene aliko Poona (seeing) kuti zina zisamawavutitse (not to be concerned with) chifukwa pena (sometimes) samatumiza ndalama mwamsanga, chifukwa chake anaganiza kuti ndipange gainiyi kuti ndizipeza pang’ono
"pang’ono" [I was having a lot of problems because my husband is far away [South Africa]. He thought of this plan, because he cannot always send money, therefore he thought that I should be doing this business, so that I find money bit by bit]. Rent of the restaurant (half the space is he’s), costs 750mk/month. “ndimawina 500/600mk” = profit selling just tea and nsima (although the menu also said “pisi ya buledi” = piece of bread, she sent one male customer away to find himself whatever he wanted to eat with his tea while she would be preparing his tea). A painted menu on the wall saying: tea wamkaka 50mk, tea wopanda mkaka 15mk, extra mkaka 40mk, pisi ya buledi 20mk, nsima ya nyama ya nkhu, mpunga wa nyama ya nkhu, extra ndiwo (last ones without prices). In cotton season she made up to 1000mk profit. With profit she buys food, clothes for the children, ndiwo, paraffin, hire ganyu. Married when she was 17, because pregnant for same reason left school in std 6, saying: “basi, ndinangochimwa”. I sinned (which was enough for Gertrude to understand that she was pregnant, others sometimes say: :ndinachimwitsidwa”. I was made to sin). Only income sources are her BS + the money that husband sends, kids sometimes do ganyu, especially around Christmas time they like to show off in new clothes, walking through the street, eating biscuits, drinking juice.

Impact on life is that; before she was having problems because husband was not always sending money! Gain yasinthwa bwanji moyo wanu? -Basi ndimaona kuti ndimavutika. Mumavutika? Eeya, kumadikirira kuti akati atumize amuna kunja, ndiye nthawi yapakatiyi umavutika kusowa sopo, kunchini, chakudya kaya ndiwo, kumazunzikira. Eeyetu, ndiye ndimangoona kuti, ayi bola, ndi bwino kumapanga chiyani gaini, kuti zina ndi zina ndisamavutikire etu. Kuti ndidzingodalira kunjira (waiting for husband outside/over there to say he would send, so in the meantime you have problems, lacking soap, to the maize mill, food or else ndiwo, having problems (kuzunzikira in dictionary; to be painstaking/to be persecuted for). Indeed, so I just saw that, no enough/at least/better, it’s good to be doing what, business. So that some of the things I should not be having problems (getting them), rather than just waiting by the road/where husband is.

Sees no disadvantages to running a BS, says about the type of women that start BS; “azimayi kukhala ovutika, ndiye amati akamaona mavuto amene akuwaona nyumbamo, ndiye amati akapeza ka ndalama, bola, ndingopanga chiyani gain kuti ndipeze chithandizo” some women are living with problems, so when they see their problems in the house, they say when they find a little money, better, I just start what, a BS, so that I find help/resources.

Mentions FINCA, concern and Rural finance as org’s giving out loans, hasn’t gone to get a loan because her husband sends her the money to continue her BS.
who is with agogo while she sells. Stays in HH with 4: husband + W + child + her younger sister. Selling maize and thobwa is currently their only sources of income. When they harvest enough g/nuts, sell those. Do no ganyu, hire neither, says that BS hasn’t changed her life, sikusinha. Advantages are that it is easy to find soap and ndiwu. Can’t think of disadvantages. About the type of women that start BS: ena akupanga kuvutika monga chakudya, ena pakhomo [some face problems like food]. Decided not to take loans, because cannot manage to follow their rules, may be her BS is not going well, then they may come and take the only plates you have in the house. Liked this girl, looked at me while answering, may have helped that she sat on the little bench (may be 15cm high) and I on ground.

Crossing the street found a woman frying potato chips, which I see mostly done by men. However, BS is her husband’s. next to her, under a red CELTEL umbrella and behind a red plastic table with celtel phone that looked like a landline but is actually a cellular phone, sat Mtendere (20) who rents a house in [nearest tradingcenter], where she goes to a private secondary school, but now during school break does BS for her parents who stay in their village. starts this telephone bureau last Friday, so only 1 week now. It’s just a try-out, if profits are satisfactory she will continue, otherwise just stop. Parents decided, are farmers who sell maize, masamba, onions. “azipeza chithandizo pakhomo” they have to find support for at home. Before Mtendere sold tomatoes and masamba for her parents, so far the profit from the telephone BS seems much less than selling veggie. There are 5 people doing the same BS in this street. Sits behind her telephone 6 days a week, on saturday goes to church. After a month she will give all her profit to her parents who will then give half of it back to her, with which she can buy materials for school. She isn’t married, but has a boyfriend who is also in form3, like her, but at a different school. He promised her they will marry later. Other sources of income for parents: mother’s sister sends money from Lilongwe, and Mtendere’s elder brother is a driver in Lilongwe, sometimes helps too. Says that those who have to buy their merchandise have problems selling, because those who grow their merchandise themselves can offer them cheaper, about the type of women that start BSs she says: some are intelligent and choose to start BS, ipv moving around with men to find money without being afraid of diseases. These women just think differently. One thinks: I washed my body, put on nice clothes, cannot sit by the side of the road [doing BS], getting dust on me each time a car passes, better move with men and find me one.

Mentions FINCA as org that gives loans, but her or parents have never taken, because it is difficult to pay back, when you fail they may come at home to take your child or property.

Saw Teleza, Emra and Rashida with daughter and granddaughter. Last one’s had been to hospital with baby. Saw Tumanene Usi on way to [nearest tradingcenter] in morning.

Earlier Ada told Gertrude that her mother Hilda had gone to [nearest tradingcenter] to buy fertilizer and also bought a knitted hat for Ada’s child for 80mk, while Ada had been learning to make exactly those hats herself! Mother could better have bought thread for same price, of which 2 hats could be made.

Check MDICP whether there are questions on women having independent income. What I am doing now a better be done large scale, in a survey, there is little qualitative about it.
Nov 22 Saturday

1009  Thokozani passed by in morning with hoe, baby on back and plastic bag with small mangos. Planted half her field now, will do the other half when the rains start again, since we planted on Wednesday no rains anymore on Thursday and Friday, and today clear blue sky again. [Thokozani] Said her husband just shouted to her when she started about the coupon again; “am I not a grown up person? I know what I am doing, don’t ask me that!” Doesn’t know where he went today.

1010  GVH working on land between our and Thokozani’s house with several young men. Making ridges and planting at the same time. At some distance her husband was clearing land. She [GVH] had given Thokozani a very small piece of her land there. Thokozani had complained, to give her at least all the ridges up to the small path to the borehole (which is still not very big at all), so she could at least be planting some maize. When GVH saw the few pumpkin plants that are growing on the bed that Gertrude made weeks ago, and has been watering twice a day ever since, she said she wanted some of them, probably used to be treated as e.g. Jasmine did when she just came to Mudzi B; sharing thobwa if she had made, giving GVH half the chicken if she slaughtered one). But Gertrude said she wanted to prepare them herself today, which is only the second time we are eating them since I came back from NL. Later Gertrude was taking the ‘veins’ of the plants, GVH passed by saying to me she was on her way to find vegetables. Gertrude did not respond.

1011  Several people asked us, yesterday and this morning, whether we had been to town/hospital yesterday. Gertrude laughed about them using the word “town” for [nearest trading centre], confirmed but gave no more details even that was obviously what they were after. Also when going somewhere, she usually answers vagely when someone asks us where we are going “over there”, waving her hand in the direction that we are going. Not really fair, I am asking all sorts of questions to everybody, and she stays vague about our own abouts.

1012  How do I get more insight in relationships with men of rural women who have own income? Should I ask other questions during interviews? Most enlighting cases: women with own income who stay with ‘bad’ husband, BS women who divorced ‘bad’ husband, women with income and children from several men/several husband, since starting BS/job, single mothers be able to decide herself how to spend the money she finds through selling crops.

1013  Young daughter of Elube passes each morning after breakfast to the borehole with a basin full of dirty plates to be washed! Again showing that her claim that she is literally only eating mangos cannot be true. Elube herself passing around noon, selling chigumu. Daughter of son of Eveles comes early in morning to ask if we still want bike, price is 7700mk.

1014  In NL: find literature on research question, how increased independent income for women impacts on their sexual behaviour rural Africa”, and write synopsis. Hopefully will give some inspiration for research methods, qualitative! And theoretical frameworks, and gaps/niches. So, first write 19th month paper about first findings, then literature review and master classes whenever. Maybe talk to some key persons’ on topic and way forward. Biggest problem is, however, that I don’t want to spend much
time here, while I know I should, how else can one do anthropological research. And if I would have been given this assignment 3 yrs ago, I would have been exhilarated, fits so well in all my interests. But that’s 3 yrs ago, before a long time full frustrations far away from ‘my world’ with my people - family friends. I can’t bring it up anymore.

Eh, that was fun, *bola*, thank you life, I indeed needed some uplifting. Passed by Hamra who was making rope from khonje. Had already roped the big leaf into long, thin lines and now tore them past a hoe, while pushing them against the hoe, with some cloth tied around her hand to protect the skin so that only the fibres remained, without drying these fibres can now be knitted (used word kuluka) into a string. She will do that tomorrow when coming back from the field. I want to do that too! Have been trying myself in Guatemala, for fun, now the real thing! She wants the rope so she can tie her goats to the tree when the maize germinates, afraid that people will point at her when goats start to eat their maize. Hopefully tomorrow will also be a good opportunity to ask her why she chooses to stay with her husband even though she complained so much about him.

Went to Eveles, always fun (said she is worried because I just walk and cycle around at midst of the day without protecting my skin, and that my stomach looks as if I don’t eat anything, therefore she keeps sending so much mangos. Joked (?) that her grandchildren should just stop school: because of them they are not eating now. Yesterday only mangos, today phala - to safe ufa for the days that the mangos will be finished.

Eveles remembered that in 1949-48 people were eating the roots of banana trees, but not her, she was still young then, had worked hard on her field. Gertrude says that also in 1999-2000 people around her ate the roots of banana trees, making it into ufa, but gave people stomach aches). We agreed with her son that he will make 2 bikes for us, first a small one for Gertrude, and then end Jan, a big one for me. If we give some advance he can have the first one finished by Friday. Will make it blue, Gertrude was happy. And I guess they are happy too - ate the phala today also because they had found 10mk to buy
sugar - maybe hoping that I would indeed buy the bike and borrowing some oid. Anyway, it is very clear that they can use the money very well. Have fertilizer coupons, but not yet found money to buy - problem is / expenditure is on kids in school. But are at holiday now, will probably do ganyu in Dec, I guess? Assume, hope.

Then passed by Ntawanga’s to ask the mandatory questions. Chikondi (pregnant) was there too, and (Aisha, and Mrs Ntawanga’s brother who is married elsewhere. After asking my questions: Chikondi said she had wanted to come to our house to ask exactly the same questions: have you planted, what, do you have fertilizer, how will you find? So I answered, that we would probably going to Balaka to buy some fertilizer, a small packet. Chikondi said we should buy some from her, ok I said - not knowing whether she joked or not, pretended it to be, but might very well be true. Difficult, it will help her now, but not on longer term. And don’t you want to know what I ate yesterday? Yes, haha, what did you eat yesterday. In morning g/nuts, for lunch nsima and masamba, dinner only mango. You slept with only mango? I hope she believes it, should have explained that Gertrude does eat nsima in evening, but I am not used to eat something as heavy as nsima twice a day. Anyway, had a conversation in Chichewa, had real one-to-one contact!

Chikondi, daughter of Mrs Ntawanga, has not planted yet because she has no seeds, will beg from others. Didn’t harvest enough to keep because she didn’t have fertilizer last year. Now she did buy, borrowed money from her mother. Will apply the varieties mixed because 2 half bags are not enough for the whole field. Ate mango in morning yesterday, nsima with (home grown) nkhwani (pumpkin leaves) for lunch and in evening nsima with matemba, bought at [small crossroads market]. Nsima from bought maize. I didn’t want to ask [Chikondi] where she found the money, because an unfamiliar man was sitting with her on her veranda, may have embrassed her, maybe he gave it.

Hamra already finished planting for now: maize (3) + 1 / 2 khobwe + 1 / 2 pumpkin seeds in 1 phando, all kept from last harvest. Will continue planting when the rains start again, nandolo - but first has to buy seeds. Planted last yr but harvested very little. Hasn’t bought fertilizer, because GVH took her coupon as punishment for Hamra behaving rude, don’t come to settle the issue with Doris. Hamra did so because her older brother advised her not to go alone, wait for him to be on her side. Doesn’t know whether GVH is keeping the coupon or used it already. Now Hamra sold one of her goats and will buy here and there. Rashida and Mrs Musitafa have already agreed to sell her some plates full of fertilizer, for 600mk. Yesterday ate “nothing” in morning, just mango, for lunch nsima with nkhwani which she [Hamra] bought at 20mk from somebody passing by, and nothing in evening to save ufa for the days without mangos, will finish in December (how cru, many just rotting away now, cannot be kept). Although, I don’t know how many are indeed rotting away, maybe people really eat a lot. [Hamra] Asks whether I will be helping people to get fertilizer, says people have bbeen saying this. Gertrude doesn’t even translates, just anwers that we are really just here for research.

Filimona, with nice golden ear hangers, sitting at Hamra’s veranda. Started but not finished planting maize (bought in village, because “njala - ate all”), nandolo (kept), khobwe (bought, etc) and maungu (kept). Will still plant cotton and tomatoes. Bought fertilizer, sharing her coupon with chief Mudzi A. Says she [Filimona] did ganyu to find money for the fertilizer, but tries to keep her face from smiling shy while looking away. When I ask how she will apply the fertilizer, she answers: “we have only 1 bag [variety]”, doesn’t know whether she and chief will exchange their types or just apply 1 variety.
[Filimona] Yesterday ate mango in morning, nsima with matemba for lunch and dinner, matemba bought at grocery with ganyu money, and maize bought 8th of October at people in village with ganyu money.

Alida (sleeping on mat behind home at +/- 2pm), started but not finished yet: maize, nandolo, pumpkin. Bought all of them because didn’t harvest much last season because she was ill. So she is worried now about the rains not having fallen for some days. Sold a goat at 3700mk to buy seeds, fertilizer and maize to eat now. Sharing coupon with granddaughter Florence, will mix the types, because doesn’t see the different at harvest whether applied separately or mixed. Will still plant her hybrid maize seeds. In morning [Alida] didn’t eat, because went to [nearest trading center], for lunch eat nsima with nkhwani (bought in [nearest trading center]), for dinner same. Maize bought last Friday at [nearest trading center] (had sold goat), 900mk for about a ¼ 50kg bag, paid 30mk at chigayo to make it all into mgaiwa.

Mrs Agnessi Musitafa (husband working behind shoe sewing machine, she sleeping on kondo at other side of home) started planting maize (kept), maungu (kept), mseula (bought), nandolo (bought) and g/nuts (kept), she says wofira, but the one she shows look more like chalimbana). Also has another g/nut variety, received from FIDP, which she will plant later, smaller but with the same flat top as chalimbana, more brownish in colour. Will also still plant cotton and hybrid maize. Bought fertilizer, didn’t share her coupon with anybody, so bought 2 bags. Found the money to buy through the shoe BS of husband. Yesterday ate (uncooked) mangos in morning, and at 3pm nsima with one of her chickens. Maize for the nsima her husband bought [shoe repair BS] this month; 15kg at 900mk from vendors passing through village. (100kg 1 person 1 yr).

Saibi planted maize, maungu, mphonda, mseula, seeds she borrowed, will later pay back by weeding the field at Magda. Hasn’t finished planting yet, also wants to plant nandolo, but has no seeds yet. Wasn’t registered to receive a coupon, because there were not enough (but own mother is not sharing!). Will just work on the field without it, nothing to be done about it. [Saibi] Yesterday morning ate mango, for lunch nsima with ndiwo za mtchire (leaves from bush, wild) and nothing evening, because ufa was finished. [Saibi] Went to buy maize today, with the money from her BS, but stopped the BS now because she spent all her money. Will continue again after doing ganyu in December. Wasn’t making much profit lately anyway because the veggie were being sold at high prices.

Melina (daughter-in-law of Eveles) started planting, but hasn’t finished: puts 3 maize seeds with 1 pumpkin seed per phando. Hasn’t planted all of them yet, waiting for the rains to come again. Kept the pumpkin seeds, begged the maize seeds from friends. Will plant more maize, g/nuts, mawere, mapira, cotton, mseula, khobwe and nandolo. Kept mawere seeds, all others received from friends. Received a coupon (not sharing) but haven’t found money yet. Will mix the 2 types because otherwise not enough for whole field. Yesterday ate mangos only, but today at least phala in the afternoon. Ufa still kept from before, but didn’t eat yesterday because had no sugar, while today found 10mk for sugar.

Eveles planted on the 20th and 21st, hasn’t finished yet, now waiting for the rains to continue. Put 3 maize seeds, with nandolo, maungu, and khobwe seeds in 1 phando. In between planted mawere and g/nuts. She only kept mawere seeds, all the others received from “mbale”, a relative. Hadn’t kept any maize because her grandchildren at school came to take (couldn’t let grandchildren go hungry). Will still
plant g/nuts, mawere and rice at her dambo field at some distance. But some of her field near her house still needs to be ploughed to ridges, soil may be too hard before rains started. Has a fertilizer coupon, sharing it with her oldest grandchild, but no money found to buy yet, I should phone my husband and tell him to buy it for her! Palibe chithandizo [there is no support]. She is helping to take care of 6 grandchildren, all in school, some secondary school, can’t manage to keep money for fertilizer. Jokes that those children (some of them sitting with us) should stop school. Also she only ate mangos yesterday, gave us mangos again. Hopes her son will buy rice for her to plant.

I asked Eveles and Melina what people eat here when the mangos finished. Melina answered that people will start buying cassava from D. village, where a lot of it is grown. They themselves will be harvesting their cassava beginning of January, planted last Jan. I asked why not more people here grow cassava themselves, she answered because of goats and thieves. Does D. village not face the same problems? No, because everybody grows cassava, no body stealing. Gertrude SAYS IN Lilongwe main problem is theft of maize, around time that first green maize can be harvested, car go around announcing that nobody should be selling and buying green maize, to reduce theft. Say people don’t eat zikhawo [boomwortel?], Melina didn’t even know what it is, but Gertrude did.

Agreed with son of Eveles that he will make us bicycles at 7700mk each. Look forward to them, assembled from old bike parts.

After finishing the interviews for today, Gertrude and I sat outside eating fresh mangos straight from the tree that Eveles gave us. Tinenenji and Fatima came knitting, but didn’t want - had enough of that variety. Pamela came shortly, on her way to a tree with another variety to eat these mangos, declined the variety we had to offer. Fatima was hungry, she said at one point, hadn’t eaten nsima because young daughter Faith, had thrown away the first Fatima led already prepared. Left to eat that variety of mango from a tree on her field, but Gertrude thinks they all declined because ashamed to be eating here, people may talk. Gertrude indeed asked them, when they refused, whether mangos are like nsima, to be ashamed about when eating it elsewhere.

Leaving Eveles’s compound, Gertrude speculates that they may be opening their little grocery shop again in cotton selling season, when they and customers have money.

Florence had been eating when we first passed by. Has planted maize, mtedza, nandolo and maungu, all bought at [small crossroads market] for 1500mk. Didn’t harvest even enough for food, therefore not kept. Bought fertilizer, sharing coupon with grandmother Alida. Found money through her husband’s BS in “fresh” = fresh fish. Will mix the types of fertilizer, because otherwise not enough. [Florence] Yesterday ate phala in morning, for lunch and dinner nsima and masamba. Bought the masamba at [small crossroads market], are eating their last harvested now, will last until 2 or 3 December, she knew precisely. Then will go for ganyu, will not be hard to find now that the rains have started. Didn’t seemed too worried or concerned at all about the lack of rainfall in the last days, was like this last yr too, she said, so people are used to it. Last year some had to replant 4 x! [Florence] borrowed seeds in exchange for ganyu later.

Tinenenji and Fatima talked about a hyena that often attacks, seems to stay at [large commercial estate], where
there are some bushes. People tried to kill it in various ways, but without success (e.g. poison in cow corps). Tinenenji said that maybe it is a woman, who changes into a hyena at night. They also discussed that Magda and husband they raised price of small plate of nandolo from 20 to30mk now.

Mrs Ntawanga, chatting with daughter Chikondi, Aisha and brother from elsewhere, bawo holes in earth in front of khonde. Have only planted cotton now, because were still looking for hybrid maize seeds. Found them finished in [nearest tradingcenter] , so will have to go to Balaka. Will not be planting local maize at all. Will plant nandolo, maungu, mtedza, mawere, khobwe, kept all seeds. Will start planting when rains come again. Bought fertilizer, shared coupon, will mix for it to be enough. [Ntawanga's] Yesterday ate mango for breakfast and lunch, nsima with fish for dinner. Fish from [nearest tradingcenter] market, bought with ganyu money of husband, maize bought yesterday at Alma, 50kg at 3000mk.

Nov 22 2008

Women are together with men for money/support/chitandizo/resources (see also birth statistics in combination with reasons that many women mentioned for accepting relationship proposals) – but ALSO for other reasons: to be normal/social respect; build a house; “secret thing” (sex). Also when they their own income, many (though not all) women want to get married, or stay with a man who had multiple wives. And also women without income sometimes divorce their husband! A husband taking more wives or girlfriends is a reason for divorce particularly because support then diminishes. HIV risk maybe especially among adolescent girls, those who say there is “ufulu” now, who ‘misbehave’ like Jane, dating numerous boys. After their money, according to elderly women. Not taking marriage serious anymore, get pregnant at young age, before being properly married. This is indeed the age group with highest infection incidence. At market I see such young women/girls selling too, maybe pay more attention to them in study. Girl with phone boot at [nearest tradingcenter] said: “Some girls think 'I have washed myself, pot in nice clothes, I cannot sit besides road now [to sell something], get dusty every time a car passes. Better move around, find myself a man…”

Nov 23 Sunday

At borehole people pointed at Ainessi’s husband coming out of Emra’s house. one woman said she saw him come out of the house very early every morning. Another woman said she sees him go in every evening. Ainessi is pregnant, but according to Gertrude he could still have sex with her [thus not necessarily reason to look for sex elsewhere]. Just because this one is a new one, Gertrude thinks. They were furthermore complaining about the rains that haven’t fallen since Wednesday afternoon. Most have stopped planting again [Nov 23].
Dorica, Tinenenji and one of their holidaying cousins passed by at 9:30 with hoes in their hands. So at least the cousin works on the field during her break here.

Rashida has been left by husband, he had gone to work on a large commercial estate, has finished there, and is now just staying, she said. Daughter interrupted: what are you ashamed for, just tell them that your marriage has ended. He decided, didn’t say why. She has maize seeds on a mphasa in the sun, had kept them in water overnight to speed up germination, but now that rains still haven’t come, decided to make ufa from them, still has other seeds too for planting. Already planted local maize (3) with 1/2 pumpkin and 2 nandolo seeds in a phando, and mseula (3) in a separate phando. For cotton, mawere, and hybrid maize she is now waiting for the rains. Got the seeds from Magda & husband, will weed in their field in exchange. Already bought 1 bag of fertilizer, but has the other part of the coupon with the required money, in the breast pocket of her blouse, showing it proudly, then carefully closed the button again. Says the other part is actually for Nelia, who has gone to her husband’s village without coupon, one pays about 5000mk per bag of fertilizer. Found the money to buy through people who paid back money they had borrowed from her before. Say that nowadays coupons are expensive to buy, 3000mk. Will apply the types of fertilizer separately. Yesterday in morning ate cooked mango, for lunch and dinner nsima with masamba. Bought masamba at a vendor passing by, and maize for the nsima last Tuesday at the nearest trading center: 320mk/5kg. Doris was cleaning masamba at khonde when we arrived, Rashida came back from the field. [A bit unclear, first said she bought 2 bags already, sharing with Nelia and will buy another. When I asked now she got this coupons, her story changed.]

Julia planted 3 maize + 3 nandolo + 2 pumpkin seeds per phando, and mseula (3) separately. Will still plant cotton, hybrid maize (1) (near house) and tomatoes. And khobwe she may still buy. All other seeds she kept from harvest, bought fertilizer, sharing her coupon with her mother Chenawe, will mix the types (kusakaniza). Borrowed money from her father/Chenawe’s husband to buy the fertilizer in exchange will do ganyu on their field (when we later asked Chenawe whether she bought fertilizer already, she said “we are just old people, where will we find money?” At least husband did MASAF, maybe Julia borrowed that money?) [Julia] Yesterday ate nothing in morning (no mango trees around her, sometimes finds mangos when she goes to the Njiko [pump] in Mudzi B). Gertrude says about 2/3 days per week the water tap at that side (in front of Magda’s house) is not working, then they all go to the borehole in Mudzi B), for lunch and dinner ate nsima with one of her own chickens. Bought the maize last week at vendors in the nearest trading center, at 500mk for 13kg. ADMARC is not selling yet, but in Balaka. First have to sell all fertilizer, and not all people can find money to buy their fertilizer, so it may take a while before ADMARC starts selling maize. They charge 55mk/kg, while at market 65mk/kg. and doesn’t know whether ADMARC will be offering low prices this year.

Chenawe still ill, looked weaker then before. Finished the pills that the hospital in the nearest trading center had given her, hadn’t helped. The painkillers I gave helped a bit, child will come this afternoon to get some more. Her husband started planting on his field at his village. Haven’t bought fertilizer yet, maybe she will be going (dying), she said. Before people were able to make the rains come, especially the chiefs, she answers to my enquiry (we wanted to leave again, but she said we should ask whatever we want). But now they stopped doing it, the old ones who knew here died. They used to offer something like thobwa, and then when coming home they found the rains had started. In past there were no problems like this, that the rains would stop after people having planted. There were enough
Aisha, in her brand new home now, with iron sheet roof: planted 3 maize seeds + 1/2 nandolo + 1/2 pumpkin seeds per phando, all seeds kept from last harvest. Has finished, will not plant other crops. Has no g/nut seeds, she explains, and cotton is too difficult to do on her own [+no need because supporting ex-husband?]. Bought fertilizer, sharing coupon with someone from Mudzi A 2. will mix the types for it to be enough. I forgot to ask how she found the money to buy! [Aisha] Dann yesterday eat mango in morning, for lunch and dinner nsima with matemba. Matemba “some body gave her”, the maize for nsima :started buying now”, her ex-husband (father of the children) had bought for them in October, he is still coming (Gertrude also says she sees him there frequently), but not staying. When I say that it looks as if he still loves her, building her such a nice house, she explains it is just for the children, not because of her. He has promised he will take care of his children, not of her, but she don’t want to remarry, now she knows the problems of being pabanza. The advantage of being alone is that: she is free to do what she wants, no one telling her to do something for him first, when we left the man just arrived, one of the young boys, mango is in his hand, started crying because father hadn’t brought him mandasi.

Naima (with husband on khonde) started planting on 19th and has finished by now: local maize (bought in village), nandolo and pumpkin (both kept). Bought fertilizer with coupon she shares with Chikondi. Shit, I forgot again to ask where she found money! [Naima]Yesterday ate mango in morning, nsima with masamba for lunch and nothing in evening because lacking ndiwo. Bought the masamba, and also the maize, some days ago at [nearest tradingcenter].

Balakasi hasn’t finished planting yet, planted maize, nandolo and pumpkin (kept some, others bought). Will still plant g/nuts and cotton. Has a whole coupon for herself, but no money to buy. Will do ganyu when the rains start, will mix the varietie for it to be enough. [Balakasi] Yesterday morning ate mango, at noon she was not at home but children ate nsima (prepared by Esnart) in evening ate nothing because ndiwo was lacking, at other day they sometimes eat phala. But why not yesterday, and why did she get a whole coupon for herself?

Gertrude meets Pamela at the borehole, who points out a 7 yr old girl who she says is Grace’s daughter. Grace got pregnant while still at school (must have been 14 by then!) The girl now stays with Grace’s older sister in Blantyre, probably here for holiday, but mother is not here, nobody knows why she stays away so long, thinking she may have married again somewhere.

Gertrude asked Thokozani where her mother Rosemary is, I have been wanting to ask her what happened to her husband who we saw passing on the road one day, but not around her house for quite some time. Thokozani said that the man is ill, and staying somewhere else in Mudzi B. Rosemary is also staying there now to take care of him.

Magda planted 2 local maize seeds with 1 nandolo per phando, which she kept from last year, and some hybrid maize seeds (1/phando). Is now worried about the rains, she says, because people have been buying their seeds (would they have been so stupid to sell all of it, can’t imagine). Will still plant cotton and groundnuts, bought 2 bags of fertilizer, received a whole coupon, and will apply the rains and enough food.
types separately. The first just after germination, the second 21 days later. Have no money to buy more bags, “vuto la chuma”, [Magda] yesterday morning drunk thobwa, for lunch nsima with nandolo (both own kept) and for dinner nsima with masamba, which their visiting daughter brought from Balaka.

On way back passed by Hamra, who was just about to start making rope from the plant fibres she prepared yesterday. Her sons were there to help her. First rolling 4 strings of fibre over leg, in such a way that the strings are rolled separately as well as rolled into each other. That’s the beginning, then after a bit simply start braiding like hair (vlechten). We left them to it to get camera at home, and when we came back found Mrs Musitafa with daughters Florence and Saibi braiding the fibre too, they wanted to learn to make that own rope too. They were saying that these days people in Balaka and Liwonde are better off, while before people from there would come here to grow enough maize. Now people are rather running away from here, when we left then, Florence joked that she would come and eat with us, do so! Said Gertrude. I want meat! Florence said. Ah, you will have to eat beans, doesn’t want beans, want meat or eggs.

Chenawe and Alida expressed their worries about the rains not falling, and loosing the seeds they planted, others seem not stressed out at all. Like Florence said, people are used to it, last yr was like this too. But he, Why would the seeds die? If they have not germinated yet, they can stay well for a long period, I assume. They have been dried, can imagine that if they have germinated, some small plant is already growing, that can die without moisture, but a seed not, I’d say.

Grandson of GVH came to bring a big bowl full of mangos, more and more. Gertrude said: “but not enough space in our small stomachs, but cannot refuse them”. Will give some to child that comes to pick painkillers for Esnart. Livia gave us mangos, Eveles, Lizzie. Pamela keeps saying we should come to her tree and take some. A school boy from village kept some mangos for us, he shouted when we passed the tree he was getting them from. Gertrude told him to put them under the tree, we would come and fetch then when walking back home.

Went to Phingi who has offered Gertrude to use the sticks of the fence she just broke down for a fence around our vegetable beds, to protect the young plants (if the rains come again any time soon) from chicken and goats. Showed me the oven she is now making inside her kitchen, to be able to bake more bread and zigumu. We also borrowed their machete (chikwanje) to cut the sticks in two, to have more, since we don’t need a high fence. Grandson of GVH had agreed with Gertrude to make the fence for us, for 50 mk (or rather the bottle holder she clushed for him + 10 mk), but he hasn’t come to do it. He will be ashamed, Gertrude thinks, when he sees we are now making it ourselves. While at Phingi, she suddenly looked at her field behind her kitchen, seeing GVH taking firewood from, stealing! (kuba), she whispered angrily to us, but didn’t do anything.

Daughter of Rosemary, Mphatso, is now married, or let’s say, living together with a man. Don’t know if there has been any kind of ceremony. They first stayed in the house that Ainessi left behind, but now built their own, exact same small, unburnt brick house with grass roof. Ainessi’s house now empty again. In the time that we have been there, their compound grew from 2 to 4 houses (also Thokozani & husband have their own house now there before stayed together in the tiny house of Magda & in-law). Gertrude commented about Mphatso marrying: “in hunger season”. I wondered the same, does this mean there is
an extra month to feed for Rosemary? Or may be the new couple will just be doing ganyu to buy their own maize? Actually, where does all the money come from to pay all the many people that will be doing kupalira for ganyu in the coming month? At least he has a bike, Gertrude added.

Gertrude talks of an old school mate who get married and lived in an expensive house, 2000 or 2500mk. At one point husband started sleeping somewhere else, leaving her to pay the high rent. She had not been working before, now started a tomato BS to manage, but it was not enough. Then she decided to go to the police, to call her husband to his responsibilities. The police indeed decided that he should either help her financially to pay their rent, or give her letter that allows her to find another husband.

Got a text at 9:30pm from Marjolein, saying that Hazel become second in the big brother finale, just missing the big prize of 100.000 USD. Wow, that must be a big disappointment, she would have been settled for life (piad planned to buy/build houses to rent out). I hope the fame will bring her what she needs to progress in life. And I hope Malawi is proud of the good works and correct behaviour that she has shown in the house. Hope she will be a role model for at least some girls across Africa. That would already be a great life achievement. For now I am sure she is happy and relieved to finally go home - as I will be a week from now...

Nov 24 Monday

Dug holes around the veggie beds with the machete, put in the sticks/connected the sticks with smaller horizontal bricks, tying with a rope I had brought from Lilongwe. Put grass that has been blown from the roof of the small house next to ours against the wooden structure, and pick another horizontal branch against them to keep them up straight.

The airtime we bought in [nearest tradingcenter] costed 150mk per 100 units in stead of the normal 140mk. A small car (Volkswagen Golf) passed the marked selling the airtime to vendors.

Some of our maize seeds have germinated! Very few, but still surprising. May be the soil kept some moisture from the last (hard) rain on Wednesday afternoon. I dug a bit, and saw that also the beans have germinated, only that the sprout has not yet reach through the soil above it. Yesterday evening wind, lightning and far away thurnder, but no rain. Nonetheless Jasmine and Innocent decided to start planting again, others still making ridges.

Naima found money to buy fertilizer through her husband doing ganyu. Mother Balakasi is not at home. I ask Naima whether she knows why Balakasi received full coupon, just luckily says Esnart, some others also received a whole one. So some are just luckly and others, like Saibi Musitafa, are just unlucky? I ask. Naima tells that also Suset (granddaughter of Kima) has not received a coupon (both young single mothers...), chief Mudzi A decided like this, the one who did not receive a coupon are those that do not actively participate in community development activities (chitukuko).
Aisha is inside her house when we come to ask her how she found money for fertilizer. We hear her (ex-)husband voice too inside. “so not really divorced,” says Gertrude when we walk a way a little later. It was also him who bought the fertilizer for her (anandigulira bamboo). When I asked whether she has ever done BS in her life, she said she has sold veggies, started because of problems, stopped because she got married.

Viola started planting, not finished yet. Local maize + nandolo + pumpkin, bought the seeds from Magda & husband for 800mk. Later they will still plant hybrid maize (“41”) and cotton (no g/nuts because “difficult to find seeds”). Bought fertilizer, sharing coupon with husband. Bought with the money he found through the road clearing project. (Viola says that people say it was not MASAF but another bungwe [organization]). They will mix the 2 types and apply it then on both their fields. Husband grows hybrid maize only. [Viola] Yesterday morning ate phala, nothing for lunch to safe ufa (“things are difficult now” and for dinner nsima with eggs from own chicken. Maize for the nsima they bought last Thursday (buy bit by bit): 600mk, doesn’t know exactly how many kgs, sent boys to go and get it. At 52mk/kg. Viola has never done any BS: “basi mpamba palibe” [start up money was lacking] (and has husband who provides...).

Holy did not look healthy at all. Thin hair, swollen face, empty breasts with which she tried to feed her very small baby (too small for it’s age). Planted 2 hybrid maize seeds + 1/2 nandolo + 1 pumpkin seed per phando, because “hybrid maize leaves enough space for other crops to grow”. Kept the nandolo and pumpkin seeds for last harvest. Bought most of the hybrid maize seeds (5 kg at Balaka for 1700mk), but it wasn’t enough for the whole field, so also planted some if the hybrid seeds she kept from last yr. later will still plant cotton and a small plit of local maize (“changa, ndimasungira”). This yr will not grow pepper, because should have planted those in October, watering then by hand until rains start, but was pregnant/ in hospital by then. [Holy] Bought 2 bags of fertilizer, received a whole coupon because they would be able to afford 2 bags. Found money through selling maize. [Holy] Yesterday morning ate phala and mango, for lunch and dinner nsima with matemba. Nsima for own harvest, matemba from passing by vendors.

When we passed over compound of the Musitafa’s we saw mother knitting at khonde. Told Gertrude that she learned some pattens new from Innocent, who had learned them from Gertrude. So it is spreading now.

For several days already a radio is playing loudly at the compound of Elube. One battery costs 40mk, comments Gertrude, and they may be needing 3, is 120mk.

When back home Gertrude left to buy tomatoes, found some at Molly’s who decided to sell from home today because she has few left, will finish today or tomorrow. Now selling one for 10mk! And soon they will cost 20mk per prece. Iiii, we stop buying.

In morning I had greeted the GVH back in chiyao. In afternoon chatted (minimally) a bit with Livia, or rather, I could understand some of the things she was saying to Gertrude, “he, building the fence, all alone?” I asked whether she had planted today; no maize still missing, money to buy too. Has got the hybrid seeds, but only wants to plant local, because ‘chetopa’ = higher yielding. Then I told her that Gertrude and I were talking about how people in the past used to wash (but Gertrude had to rephrase for Livia to...
Livia said the same as Gertrude had just been telling me, with okra leaves, leaving them to soak in water for a night, that water can now be used to wash with. But both have never done this themselves, but their mothers, they say. Why don’t people do that anymore? No! Now, there is soap, but those who don’t have money for soap? Rather just wash their bodies without soap, says Livia, maybe ashamed to be using thelere leaves, says Gertrude. We got to this topic because Gertrude was teaching me to make thobwa and chigumu, and was telling me that some people don’t add soda to the chigumu but make the soda in the “local way”, but putting ashes in a lichero (the grass woven lit of a dengu), pour water over it and use the water that drops through. But is difficult, says Gertrude, also because you have to know very well whether the wood of which the ashes are, are not a kind of medicine. Soda is also needed to cook thelere (only later do I understand that people mean the leaves of the okra plant and not so much the seed carrier). So far this also the local way is sometimes used. I asked about more old/local ways of doing things, Gertrude then told about how her mother used to make the hair of her daughters “big” (ontkroezen): putting cooking oil in hair and a sharp stone in the fire for 30-60 minutes, with stone slide over hair with pressure, but would smell! Also fire they could make with these stone, by rubbing them to each other. And maize would just be made in to mgaiwa in a mtondo, not to the maize mill. Thelere leaves for washing were available longer in past because longer rainy season, and afterwards people would keep them dried. Also pumpkin leaves for ndiwo, just leave them in sun for some days. Gertrude has never heard about drying mangoes, (also not about making soap from ashes, something I have heard of) I should ask old women about this, and other traditional ways of doing HH chores. And next time that I am here try out some of these, especially the washing with thelere.

Making thobwa: bring water almost to boil, add mgaiwa so that it becomes like phala, leave to boil for 10-15 minutes. Take off the fire, put in a basin, leave (without lit) for some minutes, then stir and leave for another hour. Add grounded mawere sprouts, leave (without lit) for a night, then boil for another 10 minutes the next morning and drink instead of tea.

Chigumu: mix mgaiwa with salt, sugar, soda and water and pour the mix in a greased pot. Pat pot above glowing charcoal and put fire on the lit, leave for 30 minutes, while keeping the fire going on top of the pot. Those who don’t have oil, use sugar to keep cake from sticking to pot, and if no soda, make from ashes, as described above.

Rains came around 3pm, at last, so people will continue planting tomorrow. We will see in a few days how many seeds have survived the drought, there were nothing germinated, a new seed will be put. Rain continued till about 8pm, part of the fence we made was blown down, rain entered my room through the 2 ½ brick opening, bringing in a lot of mud from the unburnt bricks it passed in window frame. Gertrude and I spent the afternoon knitting, others will just be gossiping, Gertrude answered when I asked what those who are not knitting do with such compulsory inside-house hours. Have nothing else to do and nothing else to talk about, so will gossip, if only I could be there, and understand what they are saying. Gertrude plans to hang a string on the veranda with on it the knit wear that she wants to sell. May be even go to [small crossroads market] or [nearest tradingcenter].

Livia has just like mrs Agnessi Musitafa been participating in the tailoring training in Balaka, going there 3 days a week, but not now, break for planting. They are expecting to finish and receive a sewing machine in December. Livia already did tailoring before, but her brother took the machine
when he went to live somewhere else. This is also where Livia taught Mrs Musitafa the knitting patterns that she herself had learned from Gertrude. Will just be tailoring here in village.

Tuesday Nov 25

Drizzling again, many people planting now. We planted 3 pumpkin seeds (when Innocent came to bring in morning on behalf of mother) + 2 maize + 2 mseula seeds (given by Jasmine on 19th). Gertrude had received 3 small maize cobs from a friend when she was in Lilongwe shortly in September, kept them for planting.

Gertrude overheard GVH talking with several people (while working on the field around our house) about news that the wife of the owner of our house is now pregnant by another man. The owner of our house told his mother, GVH, to go and collect his bicycle and sewing machine that are with this woman. But she refuses to give them, saying she has children from her now ex-husband, who will be using the bike and machine. Gertrude also overheard, while making ridges this morning), Livia telling grandson of Jasmine that she will sell her (only) goat to be able to buy fertilizer. Wants to sell it at 9000mk, the brother laughed at her, who will be buying in this season; “nthawi ino ndi ya mvula palibe amene angagule”- there is nobody buying in this season, people have to buy fertilizer themselves, hire ganyu, buy food. May be at 2000mk, but not at 9000mk, still, Livia thinks she will be able to find somebody. (Lovely’s husband had told her fro SA to buy a goat in this season, because prices would be low). Livia received the goat from her uncle, who told her to share with her sister in Mangochi after multiplying.

Drunk the thobwa we made yesterday, good one, healthy too, because of the sprouts, I think. Strange how tasteful, just maize and mawere, flies much attracted by it though, completely lost interest in mango juices! Gertrude told that when cholera breaks out, thobwa is prohibited at markets, just like other foods that attract flies (mangos, cooked food). Gertrude doesn’t know how to make masese beer, says it is just leaving thobwa to ferment. At her village in Dedza every Sunday masese was brewed, men and women, young and old would start drinking after church till 6pm, and dancing.

Rashida passed by on way to borehole, complaining to someone else that she had agreed with someone [Mr Ntawanga] to build a house, and she would pay him 500mk at the end, but he never comes to continue what he started. (unburnt bricks, foundations are laid, some parts almost a meter high but most parts not).

Hamra also passed by to borehole, spotting a snake and asking Gertrude for a big stick from our firewood. On her way to give the stick, Gertrude saw another snake. Hamra smahed them both dead. Boys then came running quickly to see what was happening, and said that the head must be cut off otherwise it may still continue to multiply. Gertrude got ourknife and one of the boys cut off their heads.

The grandson of GVH that worked on field next to our house in past weeks this morning passed from somewhere else (direction from Mudzi A) with 2 bags of hybrid maize maize seeds. Gertrude
speculated that some people may be selling the hybrid seeds they received together with their fertilizer, eg Innocent, who says she will only be planting local maize.

1081 Jane in afternoon (4pm) coming to work on small plot on opposite of road again, says to Gertrude that in the morning it’s okey to work on her grandmother’s field, for her daily nsima, but in afternoon, that’s ganyu. Later a big discussion follows between Jane and GVH. B says the field is big, she should receive 800mk ipv 300mk. GVH says she is not a mzungu [white person] who can just pay 800mk, that her husband is ill, can’t sleep at night, keeps light on, which costs her paraffin. Jane is being helped by a friend and also the other (younger) granddaughter of GVH is helped by a friend (this g.daughter receives 200mk, being younger).

1082 Gertrude is getting prepared for the kupalira season: knitting baby shoes etc for people to be buying with their ganyu money.

1083 Grandson of GVH was today afternoon still working on field next to our house. Told Gertrude he will get 1000mk.

1084 For kupalira, people last yr got 20t per phando or 25t. Gertrude thinks 1 acre can be done in 25/3days (morning hours + late afternoon).

1085 From around 4pm till 8 rain again, not very hard, but at least long. While inside Gertrude told me her education had been free up to form 2, at the mission boarding school where her father had worked. Her mother used to teach girls there about knitting etc, and received assistance (financial, Gertrude at their boarding school) for it. Girls at the boarding school were not allowed to leave the compound, only on some Sunday’s to go to another church. Other Sunday’s praying in capel on compound, even holidays inside. Still some girls managed to sneak out at night and get pregnant. While in form 2 the Italian missionaries helping them so much died (car accident, I think she told me earlier) and mother decided to move back to her home village. if she would die, her children would not know where to go, have to know their home village. There a pastor related to mother was willing to pay school fees so Gertrude could continue her secondary education. But shortly after writing JSCE examinations the man died. An aunt in LL said Gertrude could stay with her, she would take care of her. But after a month Gertrude was still not going to school and decided to look for her own money. By fetching water for many houses/houses to be constructed, she earned her way through form 3 and 4, choose to go to a private school because those could be paid monthly, while gov schools per term, which she couldn’t manage, getting her salary monthly. Paid 650mk/month, other girls would come to school in boyfriend’s car, got pregnant, by now have several children. Gertrude was one of the only 2 to pass exams. Says now, without me asking, she just didn’t consider doing BS at that time she was trying to find money for form 3 and 4. Could knit, but didn’t realize people could be buying that. Didn’t think about marrying either, was only focussed on finding ways to finish secondary schooling. When young had seen people go off to somewhere everyday in nice clothes, and her mother go to “meetings” sometimes, and was intrigued by what these people would do.

1086 Gertrude didn’t drink anything today, because water too cold!
Wednesday Nov 26

Many people working on field this morning. Some still making ridges, others planting, chief Mudzi A was planting maize on a field on which he had already made ridges in May. Therefore ridges had become very hard, took some rain before it was soft enough to be able to plant. Last yr grew tomatoes on that field, will plant these this yr on a field at more distance. Saibi, with baby on back, was planting pink coloured cotton seeds, 5 to 7 per phando because grasshoppers destroy many, ondanks the mankhwala. After germination just take out the sprouts that are more than 5.

On our way back from Mudzi A 2, at 10am because many people not at home but at their fields) + 1 to Balaka, Sandala to Blantyre for funeral), selina, chief Mudzi A and GVH still planting. Some children busy taking zirombo from their holes, we stopped at chief Mudzi A’s field to ask him why people were selected to receive a whole coupon while others half or even none. Didn’t give clear answer, said that at registration everybody registered to receive a whole coupon. When they later found coupon were not enough, he asked everybody one by one whether they were willing to share (& advised everybody to mix the types so as to apply on bigger field). Those who recewived a whole one were not selected for any specific reason, just lucky. When we stepped through some high grasses to reach back to the road, Gertrude spotted a big snake just near us, high in the grasses. Chief Mudzi A went to break off a big branch, but the snake disappeared in the grass. Chief said he will cut the grasses to a low level. Reaching home Levison was also killing a snake.

Found few people at home in Mudzi A2. Victoria already planted fodya (this yr first timeoz it gets a higher price than cotton, will sell in Blantyre, send it with people who go there, few people grow tobacco here “because it takes a lot of work”. The crops are ready growing, so she has been working hard already to get to this stage before rains started) + local maize + nandolo + pumpkin + khobwe + nkhungudzu, all kept. Only tobacco and cotton seeds she acquired. Will plant her cotton tomorrow, and g/nuts later (also kept). [Victoria] Bought 3 bags of fertilizer, because also received the coupon of her mother, for the tobacco. Sold 1 goat to find the money, to a butcher from Balaka who sent people passing through villages to buy, at 4000mk. Will apply only 1 type to the maize and 2 to tobacco, separately. [Victoria] Yesterday morning ate mango, for lunch nsima with zirombo (kids found) and usipa, dinner also nsima with usipa (bought from someone passing by). Nsima still from own harvest.

[Victoria] Did a BS once, in 2000 for 1 yr: buying plates in Lilongwe with money from selling cotton, selling them here, because “mavuto kuchuluka”. Stopped because people delay paying for the plates, making it difficult for her to get enough money to continue.

Passed by grandmother of Ganizani working on field. She said that on her other field the heavy rains already washed her first maize sprouts, will start replanting there tomorrow. Esther working on, indeed, a huge field, with a small boy (1 or 2) that she looked at with loving smile. Her daughter working on another part, not staying here, just came to cultivate her field.
Josephine just back from field, has already planted maize, nandolo, mawere, pumpkin, mphonda, mseula and g/nuts, all seeds kept. Now she is planting cotton, bought 1 bag of fertilizer, sharing her coupon with Bisiweki. Found money through ganyu, this woman she shared coupon with is married at [small crossroads market], so it will be difficult to mix the types, so Josephine will just apply one type only. Yesterday ate mangos until dinner, when she ate nsima with zirombo (caught). The maize she bought last week at K. village: 1200mk for 3 x 5 ltr. She has just now finished her own harvest maize, and now put grounded maize in water to make ufa woyera of the bought maize.

[Josephine] Has never in her life done a BS: “ndimasowa poyambira ndalama”.

Zara also just coming back from field. Planted maize, nandolo and pumpkin all in one phando. And g/nuts at a separate field. Kept the first ones, mtedza bought at [nearest tradingcenter] for 200mk = +_ 1/4 acre. Will not plant cotton, because does not have enough field. Bought 2 bags of fertilizer, not sharing her coupon. Says; that the one who registered them, Victoria, told them that those who shared last yr would get a whole one this yr and other way round. Used the money she received from orphan care for her younger sister. Will mix the 2 types because it is a lot of work to apply twice.

[Zara] Yesterday morning ate mango, lunch and dinner nsima with nyamu (zirombo). Started buying maize last month, from vendors at [nearest tradingcenter]: 28kg for 2000mk, borrowed money from her mother-in-iaw, will pay back through working on her field. Her husband has called from SA, but didn’t say whether he found a job. She has never run a BS: “Sindingakwanitse” = cannot manage, says it is too difficult for her to be walking around selling.

Belita (I hear some pigs in khola), also coming from field, has planted maize, nkhwani, khobwe, nandolo, all kept. Will still plant cotton, g/nuts, nkhungudzu, kalongonda and soya. Has all of these seeds. Bought 2 bags of fertilizer, not sharing coupon, says there were enough coupons for everybody in the whole of Mudzi A (Mudzi A 1), because it is a relatively small village. Found money through brewing and selling beer, kept bit by bit. Started seving in Sept (brewing about 5 x per month). Will apply both types mixed, because her field is already quite fertile. [Belita] Yesterday ate unboiled mangos until evening, then ate nsima with mafulufute (zirombo). Maize is still left from her own harvest, is saving to avoid that it will finish soon.

Serena was planting g/nuts when we were on our way to Mudzi A2. on way back she is putting grounded maize (most are still unbroken, just without skin) on 2 mats to dry. Had left it in water for 2 to 3 days after grinding. When it is dried, will take it to the other machine in the maize mill to make ufa woyer. Planted local maize, g/nuts, nandolo, pumpkin, khobwe and cotton. Will still plant hybrid maize, soya and nzama. Kept all these seeds except cotton and hybrid maize, received these with the fertilizer. Bought 2 bags of fertilizer with the money from her kanyenya BS. Received a whole one because she has children with own fields with whom she will share the fertilizer. Will mix the types, [Serena] yesterday ate only mangos, lacking ndiwo and ufa also finished, today making new ufa of the last maize she kept after harvesting. These 2 mats with one layer of maize seeds will not last then till end December. Says she was too busy on the field yesterday to be catching zirombo like other did.

Saw a goat eating mango peel, (really almost trashless society (batteries are only things I can think of and condom wraps. Even plastic bags are preciously reused). Gertrude said she also saw them eating the
mangos we threw away after getting too old.

Ada came to knit with baby and 2 young girls. One is daughter of Levison and other mother than Thokozani, the girl stays with grandmother Florence. The other girl, Thokozani’s daughter from other man, when she was still at school (very different from what Thokozani said in interview!)

Went to see Eveles who was working at dambo, planting rice (no ridges, just ploughing). Two women passed by (walking back from Balaka where they had gone to buy maize seeds), one of whom joked to Eveles: Just get married so that husband can help you! Eveles answered she couldn’t manage to fetch water for a husband...

Eveles is older sister of Alma. Now staying (since last Saturday) with Alma to work on her rice field without walking all the way home. Also eats there Currently Alma’s (fat) daughter from Blantyre is with her to cultivate her own field and she is the one cooking for them = brought food/supplies food.

Doris passed by with friend advising her not to wear a shirt with split, because it will attract boys to sleep with you. Gertrude laughed, should she say.

Earlier (dzana?) Livia had called for Gertrude, asking her whether she not wants to buy Livia’s goat, Gertrude had to laugh hard, what will she do with a goat?

This morning Innocent was washing cloths, leading Gertrude to conclude: that means they have money now (after I said that I was hoping Jasmine would be making bread today to sell at [small crossroads market] tomorrow. Gertrude thinks they may, because apparently they have money now to buy ingredients, considering that Innocent had been able to buy soap.

Emra making ridges next to her house, radio still on.

Eveles is thinking of eating all the wofiira (cg?) seeds kept and instead plant chalimbana this yr (from sister Alma) because wofiira rots quickly.

Fields between borehole and Mudzi B 2, lying in a bit of a valley, somewhat lower than surrounding fields, already suffered from rain. Saw dried up mud streams washing away the ridges and maize sprouts. One field is from Lovely, another of Sweetness. Why did they not plant grasses like people did in Mudzi A to keep the water from destroying their fields like this. Why did they plant maize there anyway, knowing it would be destroyed. I am sure the same thing must be happening every yr? May be taking chances that hard rains will come only when maize stems are strong enough to survive.

Difficult to keep such a BS going, Gertrude said, referring to selling only once a week, (at market day). On Thursday you sell, make profit, but on Friday you need to eat, Saturday too, all days up till Wednesday
when you need the money to buy ingredients.

When GVH was working on her field at the opposite of the road from our field, Gertrude heard her say to some people that she felt too good to participate in the ICRISAT g/nut project. She had planned, had told us this before too, to plant the ICRISAT seeds on that field, but later found that only 6 people were allowed to participate and she was not chosen by Mr Chikombo and Mr Ntawanga. She had gone to the meeting in Balaka anyway. Now she was saying she as an akulu did not want to occupy herself with the 4 ridges that each participant was supposed to plant + felt she reserves. She wanted a whole field, not just 4 ridges.

Passed by HBof Amila working on field, saying he begged seeds from relatives in his village.

Thursday Nov 27

Innocent passed by at 5:30am, on her way to borehole, telling Gertrude enthusiastically that she will go to [small crossroads market] today for a meeting of CIUM because she wants to take a loan together with mother and start a BS, didn’t say what kind of BS. They didn’t make chigumu to sell at market today, no money. Today CIUM will punish those borrowers who have not been able to pay back, by confiscating their property, says Innocent. First they will be explaining about this procedure. Jasmine sends Innocent to hear what it’s all about. Coming Tuesday there will be an informative meeting for those who want to take a loan. Jasmine wants to start selling fish again.

Jasmine told me to come and look what she is doing in her kitchen (when we came to borrow a chikwanje for fetching firewood). She caught many zirombo in the night (making fire in middle of night near a hole from which the winged worms fly that little later will lose their wings and procreate). Many many, now she was frying them on a clay pot on fire, still with wings. After this will put them all to dry. Then the wings will blown away by wind, or at least easy to take them off. We keep these for ndiwo, together with pumpkin leaves, last yr she also sold them, at 10mk per small plate. In Balaka, where people don’t have these zirombo near by.

The bush where we collect firewood is clearly burnt regularly, otherwise people are afraid to go in, thinks Gertrude, people may be hiding in it. Now at least you can see whoever is in it. More difficult now to find small trees that are dried. I thought many were dead, because of the fire or so. But now that the rains have come all seems to get back to life again, hence more difficult to just break them off. Need chikwanje to cut them.

Rosemary working on land of husband, she tells us when we pass by with nkhuni. Finished planting on her own, now preparing his field to plant cotton, because that’s what he wants to grow there. Only laughed when Gertrude said; we just see you coming and going at home, didn’t say she goes to take care of her sick husband who is staying else where in Mudzi B, as Thokozani told Gertrude. so: through this marriage Rosemary’s fam have access to more land. Unless husband will just use the cotton money for his beer, may be by working on it now, Rosemary increases her right to some of the money later? Let’s see what happens when he sells.
Went to grocery to see if there are still tomatoes to be found + charge Gertrude’s telephone. No tomatoes, watha, too expensive for the BS women to buy and too expensive for local customers to buy, I guess. Bought body lotion name “sweet heart” with picture of (black) girl (contrary to most other lotions with white photomodels), a small pot of 100 grms for 35mk, at the biggest (small) grocery shop at [tiny crossroads market]. Other lotion was called “follow me” with as subtitle the attractive “petroleum jelly”. The one I bought earlier at [nearest tradingcenter], called “Lisa”, with indeed picture of blond Barbie-type head, is actually quite good. Contains cacaobutter, and “enriched with glycerine and lanolin, 65mk. The sweet heart says “Body crime lavender, enriched with vitamin Venesi, lanolin & glycerine. Also has a very small drawing of 2 embracing/kissing people, produced at DSM, TZ, EA (?), while Lisa is from Malawi, Limbe.

No women selling at grocery, one of them was at the watertap nearby, greeted us and said that the tomatoes were finished, only a man under a tree, selling dried fish. On our way back saw mats with many zirambo being dried at several houses. Gertrude said her sister always liked them a lot, and continued eating them even though afterwards she always complained of stomsch aches. Also saw a young boy, I’d say younger than 10yrs old, working on field alone, making ridges. Yesterday on our way to Mudzi A 2 saw the same thing. Passed by husband of Amila who was also making ridges (with very young daughter playing with a hoe him). He said he had begged seeds from relatives.

Daughter of Alma (fat, from Blantyre, married to a driver) will stay until after applying fertilizer, then later come back at harvest time. People will first weed (indeed in a low field without ridges the weeds/grasses were already coming up plenty), then apply fertilizer.

Grandson of Jasmine (the younger one) passed by chatting with friend, saying that his girlfriend (daughter of Fissa) begged him for thread to braid her hair, but he saw her with a man yesterday at the football match in [small crossroads market]. What to do, he asked his friend, friend answered he should just be open about it, shouldn’t hide what he has seen just confront her with it.

Coming back from Mudzi A 2 in afternoon (to increase chances of finding women at home), chief Mudzi B and Jasmine had just returned from the meeting they were called to in [small crossroads market]. Both complaining fiercely that they had thought it was something important, to be calling people at this important planting stage away from their fields. But the only massage was that they should not sell their votes, but vote what they really want. And the sun moved through the sky, chief Mudzi B gestured, njala! Only GVH received a coke for lunch, nobody else, not even chiefs. Now (3:30pm) they will still have to go the field, ah, this land Malawi! Sighed the chief shaking her head. Other people later also complaining that GVH had said only 10 could go, while at hind sight everybody could have gone. They thought those few selected would receive money, Pamela and Kondwani were discussing on road.

On way to Mudzi A 2 we saw husband of Elube throw stone to a goat that was not tied, like most others are by now (also saw a boy catching the goats for tieing, still when we came back). Mr Ntawanga passed by on bike, husband of Elube told him it was GVH’s goat. Mr Ntawanga greeted us and said, if GVH is not even tieing her goats, then other people will not do it either.
Esther was sitting with lichero [lit of basket] with maize seeds, while one of her adult granddaughters (she said daugheters but seem young) was cooking nsima. Planted local maize (3 seeds) + nandolo + 1 pumpkin seed per phando. All kept. Will still plant g/nuts (kept) and hybrid maize (when I asked about this) and cotton. Bought 1 bag of fertilizer with the 1000mk that her daughter had given her some time back. Sharing the coupon with one of her daughters. Will mix the 2 types. Yesterday ate mangos until evening, when she ate nsima with moroda (masamba from bush). Nsima from maize that she had to start buying last month, bought it from people in village. Daughter was now also preparing ngumbi [insects]

( the same zironbo Jasmine showed this morning), Esther said she was not going to eat them. Ate them as child and got sores in her throat, so stopped eating them since. Will eat mango, is enough for her, says some people did and do dry mango, but herself, she is “too busy”. When mangos finish, she says some people will just sleep without food, others make phala. Never did any BS: “palibe chifukwa”, there was no reason to, parents were doing well, so could provide all she needed.

On way to Mudzi A 2, I was wondering about whether people would change to other ways of cooking fuel rather than cutting all trees for firewood, causing all those landslides that already after few rains destroy crops. Some type of oil/gas/gel, but then they would have to pay something, while now nkhuni is free of charge. But someday in past people did also change from the free way of making ufa (in mtondo) to paying for maize mills. Asked the 2 old women we found in Mudzi A 2 about this, Esther said the first maize mills came in 1930’s, when she was still in chiradzulu. There was only 1, far away, but people walked that distance. Says the ufa/nsima was different, didn’t explain further but presumably the flour is finer from maize mill.

Faith (sleeping in house) planted both local and hybrid maize, mseula, pumpkin, g/nuts and cotton. After finishing cotton will plant nandolo. Bought 2 bags of fertilizer, “no one to share coupon with”, kept money for fertilizer after selling one goat to a butcher in Balaka via messengers sent by that butcher, in early November. Will mix the 2 types for it to be enough for whole field. [Faith] Yesterday morning ate mango, for lunch and dinner nsima with ngumbi. Nsima from the last maize left from harvest. [Faith] Traded bananas in 2000, to find money for soap to go to school, found investment money through ganyu, did this for 3 months, then bananas became difficult to find and expensive. In 2003 prepared and sold boiled potatoes with tomato, when she stayed in Blantyre. Stopped when the potatoes became expensive. We had seen her husband each time we go to “grocery”, where he seems to be running a barbershop (3 walls of grass, basin). Maria says he is just here temporarily, will return to SA next yr, when they have finished working on the land. Says he is here to help her harvest enough, but I am sure it’s cheaper to send money for ganyu than stop working and travel all that distance yourself.

Mery planted local maize (has no hybrid, she says, strange story about being told her letter for receiving hybrid had gotten lost), nandolo, pumpkin, mseula mixed with khobwe, a bit of mawere (but doubts it will germinate because of the days, of drought/dzuwa after first rainfall) and bit of g/nuts. Had kept all these seeds, will still plant cotton, just a bit. In past husband used to grow a lot, but for years she hasn’t now. Decided to try again this year to find money, chithandizo, “to be able to buy a chitenje”. In past Mery brew beer.

Sofia passed by while we were knitting, explaining to Jasmine’s grandson that if she would keep
quite to her husband when he came to see her he would not be providing for her, therefore she has to shout to him and then he does provide.

Nosalt (sleeping inside) planted local maize, pumpkin, nandolo and msewula --> bought all of them because she hadn't harvested enough for fod, finished last month. Bought half a bag of fert because not enough money for a full one. Received money to buy from a relative. Yesterday spent morning till afternoon in field, ate mango's there. In evening ate nsima with matemba (now ngumbi drying in lichero on roof). Received matemba from mother, begged maize from father's younger brother. As she is just alone, it takes her far, will pay back with maize after harvesting. Never did any BS because of the (mental) health problems she told us about earlier.

Meriam (wearing 2 necklaces, earrings and a simple bracelet) has not finished planting yet: local maize with nandolo & pumpkin. Mawere separately in mapando in between maize. Also planted cotton (bought: don't keep because difficult to remove seeds, is done with machines). All other seeds kept from last harvest (didn't keep g'nut seeds, maybe will but to plant). Will still plant hybrid maize. Bought 2 bags of fert, not sharing coupon. Sold kachasu to pay fert, since Oct, borrowed money to start (1000MK from relative in vlg). Always does BS when she is in need of money. husband told her to start again now. When she registered for the fert coupons she heard that she would receive a whole one, and since there was no MASAF this year, she had to find money elsewhere. BS of beer brewing because that;s something that many people buy. Nonetheless, today no one came. So still she will be doing ganyu in Dec, because there will be a lot of work to find. Yesterday had 1 customer who bought 1 coca cola bottle of kachasu for 100MK - with which she bought matemba for dinner [when I bought full liter bottle kachasu from Kima, she seemed not very happy - maybe preferring that money dripples in ipv lump sum at once]. Will continue BS even after she bought the fert, because coming months will be difficult - food-wise. Usually people brew especially during cotton season, but this yr she didn't because heard from others not many customers. Yesterday ate only mango's until evening because lacking ndiwo. But in evening nsima with matemba, thanks to kachasu customer. Maize for nsima bought last month at [nearest tradingcenter] for 1000MK: 70MK/kg, "very expensive, these vendors, they buy cheap just after harvest and sell at high prices in this season," she complained.

Phingi now paid for the ganyu done on Livia’s field, the ganyu that the father of her last born told her to hire at his expense. Livia must pay mother back when ever she finds the money. “Do you see now how has been cheating you!?"

Chicken disease killing chickens now. So must kill their chicken when they see first symptoms, therefore also few/low eggs available now.

Friday Nov 28

Gertrude listened to “za m’maboma” on radio yesterday. One of the stories was about a woman who told her husband she was going to get matches at 7pm. Shop man told her could get the matches for free if she slept with him. husband got worried, followed wife, found her having sex with man of shop, her parents are priests, making people to laugh at them, as their own children were behaving as the parents preached. Mother then defended daughter, saying she not even did it out of “maluzi”, according to Gertrude coming
Collected firewood in morning, found Livia with Hana on back and Phingi planting local maize and nandolo, Aisha with kids eating mangos and Rashida and daughter making ridges. Livia said mother should be taking baby on back, Phingi replied she was tired of taking care of Livia’s baby, laughing. Eventually, I took Hana, who peed on my back and started crying little later, Livia came to get her.

Later in the morning Innocent passed on her way to [nearest tradingcenter]. Gertrude fired questions about she looked well washed and dressed, whether she was wearing a new (used) T-shirt (no, just doesn’t like wearing it), and took small plastic bag that Innocent carried to check inside. A bigger plastic bag to buy maize for food, and a coupon for fertilizer and another for hybrid seeds, and a registration form from CUMO. Says she borrowed money from her grandmother in Juma village, 1500mk. Will buy fertilizer with that and ingredients for zigumu. Gertrude later says she may have sold her goat, instead of borrowing from her grandmother. CUMO is the microcredit department of concern universal. Before, Innocent said Concern just gave handouts of seeds, now they are giving out loans and changed their name. But some regulations: max 5000mk, first pay back after 2 weeks 750mk. Innocent will only borrow 1000MK, to continue her zigumu BS that she plans to have started by then. When mangos finish many people will be buying zigumu, she says, and by then they will be used that they can buy at her. But it does cost a lot of firewood, she complained. Gertrude laughed, but you can just get it for free! Jasmine will also take a loan, plans to buy fish at lake and then sell at Liwonde turnoff. The only other one from Mudzi B is Venesi, Gertrude wonders what happened to Pamela, who had earlier told us that she was writing left handed at adult school in order to get a loan later. Suset (g’dughter of Kima) will also take a loan, they just have to enlist, as a group, everybody can participate. Don’t have to mention the type of BS they want to start/continue, but do have to list the kind of property they have. Depending on the value the property they can borrow a certain amount, this is the property that will be confiscated if they can’t repay. But plates at value of 200mk, Innocent had to laugh shyly when I asked her what kind of property she had said to have, “mbuzi” [goats], she finally confessed.

Sofia in morning asked Gertrude if she could get/buy some pumpkin leaves from our vegetable bed. But Gertrude said she doesn’t want to give, “plan to use them myself today”. When one finds out Gertrude has been giving someone of our leaves, others will come too, and be angry for not getting. Sofia then decided to walk to the dimba to buy masamba.

About 1pm, Phingi came to pick up the chitenje she borrowed to Gertrude to put between her head and the bundle of firewood. She had been collecting firewood since we left the bush around 9pm. Made a very big bundle, she says, and asked Gertrude to tell her friend Livia not to leave her young children to be taken care of by grandmother when she goes far away. Should just take the baby, Phingi has also been taking care so much of Joy, the elder one, when she was still baby, enough now. Told Livia this herself, but won’t listen.

Unfortunately bike not ready! There is suddenly radio sounds and 2 bags of fertilizer, but “the 2000mk you gave were not enough for parts, are expensive now”. In stead he finished making the big bike that he was already working on. But we need a small one for Gertrude, he will now find other customer for the big one, and begged for the whole money so he can make the small one, will only be
making small profit. Gave him 5000mk, still 700mk short, says he will have it finished by Thursday, hope so!

Holy looked even more ill now, with baby on lap that hardly moved. Laughed when we arrived because she was just discussing with daughters that she would like to make a picture of her baby. Last yr mixed her fertilizer, and didn’t see any difference with applying the types separately. But on Sunday her husband will come back so they will be able to do it together, so probably will apply separately.

Eveles joking again about she wants to call my husband herself because I will get jealous when she asks me to greet him each time. Then was telling how in past there was no jealousy, 2 wives would even share the same bed with the husband. That was “chibwana”, childish, though, now this can’t happen, the only reason that I took my husband to her was because she was old anyway, otherwise I would never have "shared" my husband like that. Bcoz of her age, I didn’t feel jealous or scared, I would lose him.

Girl who we interviewed at ‘grocery’ selling mandasi, helping mother take care of all younger siblings after father married elsewhere, came running to the road as we passed by on way to grocery to pick up charged phone, just to greet us. Now stopped selling, money finished, may be continuing next week.

Passed Amila with baby on back and child on shoulders + Tumanene on their way to ‘grocery’, when we walked back to Mudzi B. Were going to buy nandolo seeds, Gertrude summarized for me that one day Amila had said at borehole that she had bought maize at ADMARC (before fertilizer was sold there, I guess) and some days later that she received MASAF money and would be buying fertilizer with it (which make sense to Gertrude because apparently she already had maize).

Thokozani just went back some with bucket of water on head when we passed borehole. husband still hasn’t come up with coupon, she went to ask his friends who said the police-stiry is not true. He hasn’t spoken about it any more, he was making ridges in front of their house when we reached there. She had been working on that field in the morning.

Went to GVH to pay rent and say goodbye, inform her I am going back to Lilongwe until January, next yr. You’ll find us eating pumpkins already when you come back! Especially from your own field, will be first. I asked her to sign receipt of all the money paid so far for home rent (7000mk, 4 maanden), she wrote Mudzi B very slowly, with difficulty.

DIL of Eveles was preparing ngumbi, Eveles says she likes them a lot, Gertrude and DIL discussed that now ndiwo is becoming widely available, and nsima will soon be lacking. Earlier Gertrude had said February is usually the most difficult month for people, food (= maize) finished almost everywhere, no ganyu to be found. In December at least kupalira, in January some kubandira, but now I hear that mid/end Jan, early Feb people will be able to eat pumpkin, so actually, January is the month with least food available, only for those with money.

Jasmine and husband passed by with 4 tied goats. husband did not receive coupon on his own, the one she
received is for them together, sharing with Innocent. For remaining field then will apply the manure from the goat khola, adding some water to it, leave it for few days, then put on ridges. Learned from Mr Chikombo, doesn’t sell her manure, nobody buys most have their own goats.

Was saying she is old, most girls will not reach her age because of that disease now, uh, (pointing to where we had the tree and HIV/AIDS seminar), edzi. In past girls, like her used to run away when men wanted something. Told again how she fled to the nkhhokwe at night when recently married, even run away for a whole yr, then husband’s fam went to police (Gertrude rightfully asks whether husband wanted marriage or arranged by parents?). Now girls, even this high (girl of about 10), just allow when a man propose laughing shyly, basi. Confirms Eveles’s story that in past, their grandmother’s generation, 3/4 wives would all live in the same house. Maybe came to talk hoping for some nkhwani? Was herself too lazy to continue watering her garden, she confessed. Gertrude just encouraged her to work harder next yr, then she’ll have what we are having. Can’t you send your granddaughter to fetch the extra water? Akukana: she refuses.

Innocent came back from [nearest trading center] at 6:30pm, ADMARC starting selling maize now, at 52mk/kg, but also still sells fertilizer, bought seeds to plant, and wants Gertrude to bring her nandolo seeds from Balaka tomorrow. Declines the offer of me asking the ICRISAT driver to take tomatoes from Lizulu for her to be selling here, no money, will just make & sell zigumu together with mother.

People will be buying cheap maize at ADMARC to be selling it later, when ADMARC stacks finish, at higher prices. Government advises people not to buy more than 50kg, so vendors just pay people to buy for them little by little.

Why don’t people make goat milk/m chemotherapy? Do they have any calcium sources?

Didn’t have anything also to do. Joked about coming to beg for nkhwani, had already sent Innocent for ndiwo at [nearest trading center].

Rosemary was about to finish making ridges on her husband’s field, when we passed in the early morning to get firewood. Said that her husband had gone to Balaka to sell grass to buy seeds, they take turns in working on the field and founding money, she said when I wondered why she was working alone on the fiel, without her husband helping.

Eveles says Alma harvested 7 bags of g/nuts, while Alma said only 3 in interview. Seven makes more sense, considering how much she seems to be selling.

Son of Eveles told us he used to be a shoemaker, then Mr Musitafa came to learn from him. And then there were 2 shoemakers in Mudzi A, so this one changed to repairing and making bicycles, which is a good BS, he says many people need his services. Yesterday he had a customer who paid 1300mk (but eh, how much of that was profit?)

Jasmine asked Gertrude if she didn’t mind that people say her name when talking to her. Here in yao-
tradition one feel offended when people address them by their name (so when saying one’s name directly is also meant as an offense). At initian girls get other names, after initiation girls are also encouraged to practice the instructions they have received about sex. When still in Mangochi Gertrude and sisters were prohibited to get out of the fence when girls came out of initiation and danced. (They climbed in trees trying to get a glimpse of what they were not allowed to see).

Nov 29 Saturday

Some rains in night, not long at least a bit hard. Many people in fields again making ridges, planting or replanting where maize has not germinated. Also in our field Gertrude is now putting new seeds in some mapando, about 12. Gertrude heard from chief Mudzi B that she was going to plant cotton, GVH finally tied her goats today.

Went to Holy to make the picture of her baby, as she wished. Baby incredibly small, 3 months old! Getting milk from bottle, Holy said she is happy because this baby she can buy powder milk for, while for her previous kids she couldn’t.

Recollections = not sure whether these were written down already.

Jasmine asked Gertrude whether she doesn’t mind being addressed by her name. Is percerved as offending here.

Gertrude cleaning our pots with sand after every meal, meanwhile explaining that this is also something that women feel competitive about, competing with the other wives/lovers of her husband, he may say the pots of the other are cleaner = better wife.

January 12, 2009, Amsterdam

Remarkable: the acceptance of times with less food available. Laconic: Jasmine saying that “just after harvest, we eat big plates of nsima,” and Livia saying “we are stupid selling maize at low prices just after harvest, as if we have completely forgotten about now” - in hunger season.

February 6 2009, Lilongwe

Gray, Thoko, Karen & Baleke commenting in staff bus on girls in area 18: we drove past a woman wearing a nice, shiny pink 50’s dress, a bit tight on her fat belly, which led Balake and Karen to comment on the many girls that come out on the streets around this hour of the day (5-7pm), especially in Area 18, looking for men. I inquire whether they are like prostitutes, or looking for marriage partner. No, no prostitutes, said Baleke, followed by saying: These girls come from well-to-do backgrounds. But also not necessarily looking for marriage, added Karen. For money rather, said Karen after some more talking, she said this in a way that this was the most correct, conclusive answer to what these girls are looking for/doing on the streets. Some more probing did not lead to a clear
answer on the exact kind of transactions the girls look for. How can men know which ones to approach and which ones are really just on their way to somewhere? You can tell by how they look, Karen answered before she got out at her house. Then I continued the conversation with Gray, who saw these girls more like prostitutes than Baleke and Karen seemed to, saying that they will tell you how much you have to give them. (They have the deal ready, old), and that they may have up to 5 or 7 lovers per evening, depending on their looks. We men know that in Area 18 we can find more sophisticated girls. Oh you should see these streets between 6 and 7 pm, full with girls! Families find it embarrassing what happens, but there is nothing they can do about it. They cannot keep their daughters inside the house, things have changed (because of television? He said something like that, but I don’t remember…)

At airport I had the following conversation with one of the young man standing outside, hussling for taxi drivers: He was born in 1980, married in 2004 with girl born in 1985, have a 4 yr old daughter. Says they met in church choir, when I asked whether he proposed at the very first time he saw her, he first said “yes”. Then I asked he knew she could be a good wife for him and then he told me a different story, that they had been chatting, that he has visited her parents etc before proposing to her after 6 months. Then they stayed in a relationship for 3 yrs before getting married through a catholic ceremony. They took time so that they could get to know each other better. “There is this disease these days” he added (without me asking about this). Says that he has not proposed to other women since: “I love my lady. And she loves me”. He said with a sweet big smile, he has a driving licence and would like to become a taxi driver, but he has not been able to buy a car. For now he is washing the cars of taxi drivers to find money. His wife is not working, they live at Domasi trading centre, he wants 2 children, “some people have many children which they can’t take care of”. To manage not having many children they do “kulera”, his wife takes injection every 3 months.

When I later asked Gray how I should interpret the fact that this young man first said that he proposed on the very same day that he met his wife (like many women in the village told me!), but later said they chatted for 6 months, Gray said he had never heard of proposals being made at the very first encounter, at least not in town.

Lilongwe and surroundings are very green, some maize have cobs, others not yet. There is hunger, Gray says, but not as bad as some yrs back because at least ADMARC has maize. So if you can find money, you can buy. Gertrude told me on phone that people have started eating ndowe now (no! so I missed the end of the hunger season, have to come back next year), which surprised my colleagues at the office, so early. Must have planted early, they assumed, but I don’t think that was the case.

On way to Lilongwe we saw a man ploughing his field, preparing to plant potatoes, said Gray.

**Mudzi B, February 8 - Arrival in village!**

Very green, when arriving towards Mudzi A, Gray commented that most maizefields looked like fertilizer had been applied, though not all. He saw signs of a dry spell, last rains (heavy down-pour) 2 days ago, people are already eating ndowe [green maize cobs] now. Indeed, once arrived chief Mudzi A and Innocent came to bring some ndowe. Chief Mudzi A says stealing of dowe has begun now, the
Livia and Sofia were the first to come and greet me. When I gave them some of the pictures I made of them, they all (Livia & Sofia & Gertrude agreed that Sofia looked like a business woman (“gain”) on her picture, meaning she looked well, fat, said Gertrude [hence, ambivalent attitude towards BS women, both pos and neg].

Many stories have been going on, says Gertrude, she doesn’t know where to start. Many divorces and new marriages, amongst others.

Our maize at the place where we throw our garbage (most of it natural, decomposable) looks spectacularly better than the other maize. The last one received fertilizer, while the first one did not. Indeed, confirm Gertrude and chief, manure is better than fertilizer, among others because it cannot be washed away by rain, best is to make ridges right after harvest, commented chief, and than leave the dried maize stems and leave to rot on the field. But few people do this (he did). They know about it, but “ulesi”. Also theft (for which both him and more explicitly Mr Ntawanga came to apologize, saying how worried they were, that the thieves were certainly not from within this village (“he has been chased away,” probably referring to the husband of Selina). Mr Ntawanga told me he had reported it to Mr Chikombo and together they went to the police in Balaka. I thanked him a lot for his help. Grandson of GVH also came by, I gave him 1000mk for spending 3/4 nights per week here at the house to protect Gertrude (although had made clear in beginning that it was no ganyu). I suggested to the chief whether it was because of njala that people are now stealing, but he and Gertrude agreed that is rather “ulesi” [laziness]

Husband of Blessings sent her blankets and zitenje from SA which she sells at 9000 and 800mk, people buy to be paying later with cotton money.

He also said that that many people are borrowing now, may be 1000 MK, later paying back 2000 MK. Within village? I asked, yes, one cannot go to a place where they don’t know and trust you to ask for money. For example, the (ex-husband) of Esnart, who came back fro SA, loans out 1000mk for spending 3/4 nights per week here at the house to protect Gertrude (although had made clear in beginning that it was no ganyu). I suggested to the chief whether it was because of njala that people are now stealing, but he and Gertrude agreed that is rather “ulesi” [laziness]

The chief himself bought a big bag of salt (showing the height, about 10kg?) for over 1000 MK (1400?) which he now sells in exchange for maize after harvest (1 small plate of salt for 2 bigger plates of maize). He found the money for the salt through MASAF and he also asked to make mat (mkeka = knitted, not like mphasa which is more difficult). He followed the example of his wife selling salt like this.

Bcoz of sun, rain, heat, maize is maturing early, compared to late of planting. Chief expects people will harvest end March/beginning of April. Cotton end of May/beginning of June. Now people are planting potatoes (sweet) which will mature in 1 month. Jasmine said people are now getting worried because it has not rained for 5 days, bad for potatoes and maize, which will die after 2/3 weeks of
drought. Cotton is stronger than maize, said the chief, will not die as fast, Jasmine was first praising the good weather so far (kutentha) which led the maize to mature quick. But the rains have to continue up to the end of February. Gertrude and chief discussed that many people planted more cotton than maize this year, because of the promised increase in price: 100-120-150mk/kg. Gertrude concluded that this will lead to more hunger next season than this season. People prefer/ are seduced by the prospect of money they can get through cotton, said the chief. I asked why people did not plant potatoes earlier, hearing that they mature so quickly. Gertrude then said she had been enquiring about the same, but had not found a satisfying answer yet. Jasmine answered me that they had been too busy on their fields, planting/taking care of the maize and then the cotton. Priorities, thus, to Gertrude someone also said something about rotting quickly if potatoes are planted early.

Ada came, with her babygirl, to have her own braided hair by Gertrude (which has also braided Sofia’s and Innocent’s hair, and many others, which takes her less than half an hour!). she looked more skinny than before, Innocent, Jasmine, Joy are as fat as before, or almost at least,

While braiding, Gertrude was called by the new lover of Venesi, who wanted to speak to Venesi. Gertrude gave the massage to Ada, so later Venesi came and called her new husband on Gertrude’s phone. This morning Venesi had come to Gertrude with a note that Venesi wanted Gertrude to text to the new husband: Wandalama uja wabwera ndiyeye inuyo musalephere poti akudikira ine yo kuti ndimasule ngati ndalephishe kapena ayi. Tunga. Translation: “the one of the money came so you, do not fail because he is waiting for me to let him know whether I fail or not” [will take the money or not] This man is married somewhere else and asked Venesi to borrow money for him to use at home, with his other wife! And she does! How strange…… She recently went to his village to attend the funeral of his grandmother. When she called him just now she stepped away, besides the house. When she came back Innocent asked laughing whether it had been her husband that she talked to, which Venesi confirmed. Jasmine told Venesi to be open about it to her, because this man is related to Jasmine, so Venesi can be open to her. Venesi then said about that funeral that she had gone to. Jasmine said that Venesi should have informed her, then they could have gone together. The man sometimes spends the whole day at Venesi’s house, Gertrude saw him go at 9am and return at 5pm. She considers herself married, calling him husband (mwamuna wanga) instead of chibwenzi, may be because he really spends time at her house regularly? But there has been no ceremony and nothing has been paid to the chief, which should be done when 2 people start living together. How much? How does this go??]. For example, Pamela was seen working with a man in her field for about a week, then she told Gertrude that they were living together and that the man was going to go to the chief to pay this “marriage” money. But app 2 weeks later Pamela told Gertrude that they had never reached that point because Pamela had sent him away because of his behaviour.

I bought sugar and 2 bars of soap for chief Mudzi A & Mudzi B & GVH, I now regret that I did not also bring tea for them, what else can they do with sugar? It was Gray who said sugar is better than salt…. Ah well, with the maize coming up soon they will be able to buy tea themselves, said Gertrude. And they can put it in their phala.

First topic of Jasmine was also how shocked and worried (kudandaula) she/she had been because of the thieves entering Gertrude’s house and truly stealing everything they could, even the blanket she had thrown off (but not the one over her sleeping body). Even the chigumu, but they were so kind to leave her some mgaiwa that they pore in a bowl, taking the rest. Jasmine said they often kill (signalling her
throat being cut) the people they stole from. Gertrude is a bit happy with the protection I bought (doom insect repellent to spray in eyes, and air freshener with lighter to blow fire) but said that thieves often use traditional medicine to make sure that someone does not wake up while they are inside the house. She seems feel safer now that I am back, saying that the grandson of GVH does not need to sleep here anymore now that we are the two of us.

No funeral in the past 2 months [Dec & Jan]! Chikondi gave birth to a baby boy twin. The father is back again, since little after we chatted at her house, she has supposedly been saying that I will be helping her financially, leadind other women to say that they have children too and deserve the support just as much. Gertrude made her hats and socks for free.

Evelin is on ARV! Or at least Sofia told so to Gertrude. Also told Gertrude that Evelin has an affair with the husband of Elube and the husband of Nola. This last one is said to be the father of the baby of the young daughter of Venesi.!? Say Sofia, Innocent, and Jasmine (who are all of the same compound though), who say that the head of the baby resembles the head of this man….. But what evidence is this gossip based on?

February 9, Monday

GVH came to greet us when we had breakfast (boiled g/nuts which I had bought from Balaka and boiled maize cobs). First thing she said was how sorry she was about the theft, and how luckly we have been that Gertrude was still alive. But meanwhile GVH has done little to help get the suspect caught, Gertrude asked some boys from this village to assist her to physically catch the man (the police called 3 x asking whether she caught him already), but they refused saying that the GVH should decide so. Sweetness’s husband who was the only (sane) one who went with Gertrude to F. village to try and catch the suspects (besides husband of Amila) has been threatened with death by Ainessi’s husband, Rose told us. She seems to approve of the idea to at least gather the GVH and chiefs to pursue the issue, “he has bought a very expensive blanket for the baby that Ainessi gave birth to, and he came to sleep with Emra again last night, so he seems to have forgotten that people were looking for him”. This would be a good time to catch him, concluded Gertrude. Rose said that many thieves are around now, more and more, because of all the maize in the fields, people are afraid of theft, so it would be good to go to the police, most people don’t report. It would set a good example to others who have been robbed, as well as to thieves.

Livia has several zibwenzi, or at least had them in the past months. Was proposed via letter via Suset, spent nights at Fatima’s ex-husband (Fatima left him because she suspect he was seeing someone else, coming home late at night, but she didn’t know who could have been Livia, but Tinenenji and Dorica also were/are with him, Tinenenji told Gertrude), also seems to continue seeing the father of baby Hana (whom she had tried to abort, she told Gertrude, by 10-15 painkillers and a cup of aloe vera drink), one at [nearest tradingcenter] hospital (she showed Gertrude) and one from M. village who is now talking tro her brother about marriage, friend of mother staying misomali found him for her. So, Gertrude concluded that probably her saying that she got injection without knowing purpose was not true. The fact that she takes injection leads to think that she doesn’t use condoms.
Jeneti passed by after we had not found her at home, to give her picture of daughter Ellesi. Very sad about sewing machine being stolen, may be hoped I wanted to assist her when hearing I had been at her house. Has not reported to police because thieves use traditional medicine, so what can you do? Traditional medicine protect house does exist, she knows someone who can get you those, but she has no money for it. Do we may be have some sait? Ah, not anymore, says Gertrude, Gertrude has been giving hands of salt to some women at onme point.

Blessings lost weight, which surprised me because she seems to be well supported from SA. Venesi, Chisoni, Lizzie, Molly all look the same still. Belita commented on her picture that she had lost weight (kuonda). She is not brewing beer at this time because she doesn’t even have maize to eat. After harvest she will start again, people still buy though, that is not why she is not selling.

Price/quality differences between the various zigumu bakers: not really, says Gertrude. Jeneti once tried, but people didn’t like it, had many flies. Jasmine’s is liked best, Jasmine has not baked bread since I left, saying that people prefer the heavy zigumu.

Ex-husband of Esnart (south of our house) called his nephew or younger brother back of 1,5 yr in Lilongwe (went there after finishing school, speaks English and sold cooking oil) to take care of his house now that he has divorced and will build a separate house for Esnart & kids to live in. boy is fatalistic about his faith, simply obeying as he was told, will survive, he says, but will not continue his BS as people in village don’t use cooking oil, just water. Tells Gertrude that his brother/uncle did not make public that he will be going back to SA “because a lot of people are using witchcraft in this village,” did not want anyone to be jealous and bewitch him so he said he went to Zomba to new wife, but not that after this he will continue his journey to SA.

Sandala + wife of [Bicycle maker] passed by on their way to a meeting of the tree project which only selected people could attend. Christina has stopped selling mandasi now, people have no money, including herself. Indeed, I said, when I passed [small crossroads market] I saw the market place overgrown with tchire, next month people will have money again. At least now people have started to fill their stomachs with green maize, so they can eat just a bit of nsima. Ndiwo there is enough, especially masamba, but also mseula and thelere.

One of the mandasi girls which we interviewed at grocery has started coming to our house to learn to knit. Also came today, Gertrude was going to try to find out how she became involved with boyfriend (told Gertrude earlier that she may marry him while told us last time that I was here that she does not want to marry yet but help mother take care of younger siblings. Tinenenji and Elessi also came to knit/closh. Tinenenji, while closhing a decoration for Gertrude to sell in Lilongwe, meanwhile had her hair braided by Gertrude, until she was called by Ada who said that ex-husband of Fatima wants to see her.

Jasmine asks Gertrude how she is doing. Ah, a bit ok, answered Gertrude why? Chimanga……earlier she has put cobs on fire to boil for app 1,5 hour, which led Ellesi to comment that this is the season. After which all (Gertrude & Ellesi & Lucia & I) were saying that later on everybody will be eating maungu in
morning, afternoon and evening, like now maize, and during mango season only mango.

Ellesi said that Grace also started BS of kuoda sugarcane.

GVH passes by, coming back from hospital, at dawn, saying that if she had been in a new marriage this late return would give her problems, joking. Tomorrow at lunch meeting with chiefs & Mr Ntawanga.

Dorica indeed went back to school but at [small crossroads market]. Mr Chikombo (headmaster at [tiny crossroads market]) complained about this, suggesting she was having a boyfriend there and therefore choosing to go to the far school. Mother was not happy with this, afraid that Mr Chikombo just wants to be in relationship with her (Gertrude heard her say while doing MASAF). But now Dorica indeed decided to go to [tiny crossroads market] again. Jane was told by mother not to go back to school “because you will end up pregnant”.

Dora & Auleria (daughter of Thandizo) started selling tomatoes from their dimba fields. Gertrude people are starting to speak up against GVH, for example at the distribution of nandolo by concern universal.

husband of GVH decided to work alone on his fields, not hire ganyu, when his wife told him that ganyu now costs 30mk/phando, not 20-25 llike last year. Nobody offered him to work for him at lower price, so apparently there was enough ganyu? Sometimes tells his grandsons he won’t buy them ndiwo if they don’t help him on field, or promises them to buy them the head of a goat.

Mphatso lost baby in early stage of pregnancy, mother Rosemary went to Jasmine for traditional medicine, but Jasmine said they had to go to hospital for this problem. Now Mphatso is better again.

Febrary 10, Tuesday - rains in night, not very heavy.

Footsteps of a dog around the house, which worries Gertrude as it is said that ‘the thief’ moves around with a dog.

GVH sent several people to receive money for her when MASAF paid, “ah, she received a lot of money,” says Gertrude even Mr Ntawanga did the same! And chief [tiny crossroads market].

Alida & Thokozani selling sugarcane at grocery, buying before at Liwawadzi, now move nearby. Innocent made and sold kanyenya 1 day at grocery, and contributed the money for HH food after Jasmine complained that she is the only one buying food. husband first refused to use his money to buy food (stopped buying food for fam after 2 or 3th child, when Jasmine got own income through BSs) but finally gave 1000mk. They and Jasmine are sleeping in separate house at same compound, when Gertrude asked why, Jasmine just said that they are old now, he washes his own clothes, but does eat the food prepared by Jasmine.

Gertrude encouraged and taught Innocent to dry nkhwani = pumpkin leaves to save for later (Oct, Nov)
which first she didn’t do but now decided to start, Sofia followed her.

At 8am Jasmine, Innocent, Suset and we, went to [tiny crossroads market] (sat in shadow of church) for CUMO meeting. Again the (young) field worker had to disappoint the group, telling them that the loans that they have been waiting for since Nov/Dec cannot come through. He showed Gertrude and me a print out on which it said that this group (BAK 14, mthundu) had 2 outstanding balances (first loan was a total of 98000mk, outstanding little over 2000, which according to his story started with an small outstanding balance of only 54 on top of which a 750 MK a fine came etc. the second loan was 53000 MK, which according to his story included the 2100 MK debt of the previous loan. Of this 3800 (app) is still outstanding, but after a lot of explaining he claims that this is only a computer mistake at the office, actually all loans have been paid off, they just need to wait until this administrative problem is fixed. Group complained that they have been waiting for so long now, they rather stop here and join MADEF at [small crossroads market]. The mlangizi told them to write a letter so that they can get their savings back, after which he dictated the letter to secretary Suset (who wore a chitenje with computers depicted on it). The others did not really follow what was written done, nore were they told afterwards, not read aloud, signed by all oid. Suset had a track record book, so at least the mlangizi cannot cheat them with the amounts they gave for savings and received and payable back loans

At [tiny crossroads market] school Saibi and Tinenenji were selling sugarcane, Jasmine brought a bucket of zigumu to [tiny crossroads market] and sold some on the way. Had made them on Sunday and had gotten worried now because still not sold all of them, lowered her price from 10-5 MK and sold some.

On our way to [tiny crossroads market] Suset said she wants to sell her voting registration card at 4000mk to people who come from Blantyre to somewhere here in Balaka. The women wondered how those cards can be used by others since there is a picture on the card. They further discussed that under Bingu there maize at least for sale, while during Bakili there was hunger. Even though most maize is bought and resold by vendoes, at least there is. Gray had mentioned the same.

Phingi showed a little red flower, explaining that it will prevent your child from falling ill if you sleep with another man than the father of the child. Livia was very interested, later Gertrude told me that Livia had been called by a man from Balaka whom she then promised to meet on Monday, when she went there anyway for her tailoring course.

After meeting met with headmaster of [tiny crossroads market] primary school to arrange that I can come with Tjeerd’s drawings and have children here draw about Malawi.

Then moved on to Venesi to take picture of her cotton field, as she requested yesterday. Her field is about 1,5 acre and will hopefully bring her 20.000mk when selling. Passing by another cotton field we saw a young man spraying his plants, farmers can rent this spraying equipment at 20mk/day at the same place that buys cotton, plus a bottle of mankhwala for 15ltr of water, spraying every 2 weeks.

Passed by field with small yellow maize plants and lot of weeds, hardly any cobs. Field from Grace Phiri, said Venesi, Gertrude later tell me that Grace complained that her mother would share fertilizer coupon with her but then bought and used the bag alone. Possibly because Grace had just disappeared to
Mzuzu without a word…. Gertrude said: “and she hasn’t planted cotton either, I don’t know where she will find money/food”. Some maize fields were flushed just after applying fertilizer, maize looks bit yellow and smaller (Elube, Lovely)

1212 Husband of Julia passed with his bike and a dengu full of dried fish.

1213 GVH, chief Mudzi A & Mr Ntawanga gathered at our house as I asked to beg their advice on how to proceed with the theft follow up. Nobody seemed to doubt that Ndaba is the main suspect, and the question for them was rather how to catch him. GVH first claimed that he was not around anymore, gone off to his home village in C., but Gertrude, N & chief Mudzi A said he still comes at night to sleep with Emra. Chief Mudzi A also said that although Emra claimed that her radio has been stolen the same night that thieves had entered our house, he still heard a radio at her house. Especially my argument that thieves are a big problem to all the maize and soon the cotton in all the fields seemed to trigger the attention and agreement that something should be done. Although GVH felt asleep during meeting, besides shamelessly eating almost all the traditional Dutch biscuits that I served. Mr Ntawanga suggested that sub-TA [small crossroads market] should be asked to sent 3 strong boys who together with 3 strong boys from Mudzi B can catch Ntaba, tie him to a tree and then the police can come and get him. The police already told Gertrude that there are many thefts but few people who actually report them, let alone catch the thief. They may throw him in prison without further ado, I get the impression, first GVH tried to shift the responsibility to the chief of F. village, where Ntaba resides. But Gertrude told them of all her efforts so far. Eventually it was agreed that a massage would be send round to all 6 chiefs of group Mudzi B to gather tomorrow at 3pm and discuss the issue of theft in general and this issue in specific. After GVH left, chief MA said he will get involved himself, making sure that indeed this happens because GVH often says she will do things and then does not.

1214 This morning GVH + husband working in their fields around us weeding. husband of Jasmine was also weeding his cotton field.

1215 Visited Chikondi & twins (K & L) of whom she wanted a picture. Babies are 2 months now (born 7 Dec), small but do look fine, although K looks weaker than L. Chikondi has small breasts, and says she already started feeding the kids porridge. When I inquired she said that the father of the babies now also stays with her at night, he is a drunkard though, I read from Gertrude’s notes.

1216 Evelin told Amila at borehole that she is too weak to go to Liwawadzi to buy sugarcane for sale, cannot manage. Physically challenging... Cotton has to be weeded about 5 times, but only first time is lot of work.

1217 Little ganyu now. Indeed Gertrude asked Amila, who usually goes for ganyu, and Amila answered that there is no ganyu to be found now. That’s probably why many women are now trading sugarcane, says Gertrude. Zigumu is not attractive anymore because everybody can now eat maize. Before some kids took money to school to buy some snacks, now they bring maize, Jasmine complained about this too, having problems selling her zigumu and therefore lowering her price.

1218 Suset looks weak, noticed Gertrude, Venesi said she had malaria for long time, 1or 2 weeks. Pamela also had
malaria, but is better now. I asked her whether she has a mosquito net, she said she does, but I have not seen yet. Gertrude says Sofia (at Jasmine) has, Jasmine says she also has one. Gertrude says people receive after giving birth at hospital, but some sell at 50-200mk. Gertrude bought her own at 150mk like that in Lilongwe. She thinks that most people here don’t have a net. Rains in afternoon.

In morning Esnart said that her husband called her this morning to tell her that he reached South Africa.

Husband of Jasmine doesn’t bring in money for HH food, (Jasmine complains) but he works in their fields a lot, while Jasmine not, often busy with her BSs.

All Venesi’s children are from different fathers, Livia and Sofia told Gertrude (separately from each other). They said so following fact that Venesi now has new boyfriend, “oh, there comes the next one”.

By now no one selling masamba at [nearest trading center], says Gertrude, enough to be found everywhere. Also very few people selling tomatoes, the woman that we interviewed there selling mandasi stopped soon after our interview. Gertrude met her and enquired; no money to continue.

February 11, 2009 Wednesday

Just asking more questions is useless, I fear. Gertrude wrote about Jasmine asking Emra where she found the money to buy mgaiwa for zigumu. Esnart answered: “masiku ano asamafunsana”, making friends gaining trust is the only way to find some honesty, I get the impression. Although I fear it will be very difficult to overcome my position as ‘the researcher’. Especially if I continue explicit interview, making friends through gifting will also make enemies. I would like to buy some formula baby milk powder for Chikondi, for example, but her suggestion that I will be helping her when her twins got born already led to other women complaining that they also have children, that they also struggle. Fortunately Gertrude is in close contact with many, she is my research tool, so to say, but what can I add with my presence?

The kanyenya woman and Venesi were proud of their status as BS woman: amayi a geni. That makes it easier to talk about that topic with them. But if they would also get financial support from boyfriends, for example, they are not very likely to tell me. Nor Gertrude, by the way, that kind of info rather comes from third persons gossiping. To Gertrude while they are knitting here, or at the borehole or via Livia who then tells Gertrude.

The favors that have been appreciated so far were the soap and salt at the first interviews, and the photographs. Some, eg Venesi and Holy, even asked me to make specific pictures of them (in cotton field and with new born respectively, and Chikondi of her twins, and Alida of herself). Help in fields? Also leads to jealousy, would people not see the exchange-deal: info/honesty for support?
Is the recording of life histories feasible? So much lying and hiding of facts, not only to me, to everybody, then why would they suddenly be open to me?

Do more interviews with project staff and leave inside info from villages to be collected by Gertrude? still, I would really want to become somewhat more accepted, appreciated, liked in community. Is so difficult without speaking the language. More interest and explicit valuing of people’s daily activities? Like Jasmine making bread, Hamra making robe, fetching water at borehole, fetching firewood, cooking, washing clothes, maize mill, working on fields, just be more visible and insist women to teach me brings. But washing with thelere, weeding, harvesting maize, making ufa.

Gertrude thinks by end March people will harvest maize, but they will stop eating green maize by end of Feb, when they get dry. And pumpkins will be available, at harvest time people will work on field but also do ganyu. Harvesting cotton is more labourous, will take 1-2 weeks. Gertrude says that Innocent told her that people harvest and sell some, harvest more and sell.

Gertrude looks through my pictures of all the women we interviewed and commented the following on some: Lucia (girl from grocery) told Gertrude that she had a boyfriend for some yrs but her grandmother was not happy with it and eventually told him that Lucia has 2 children and is very rude.

About Aisha people commented (when she passed by at pay out MASAF) that she is “olongolola”, rude, talkative and that is why her marriage ended, but ex-husband still comes sometimes.

Gertrude saw Nelia sell mandasi at [small crossroads market] several times. Paula stopped selling at grocery, saying that she had no money. Gertrude saw her at MASAF pay out receiving money, but also afterwardsa Gertrude did not see her selling again. Nelia came one day to bring back the shoes she had bought before from Gertrude to give to someone else (so not used yet) to get back 30mk that she paid for them (simple shoes without partten, because Nelia had only 30mk, not the 40mk that Gertrude usually charges for shoes), which Gertrude gave (Suset later bought the same shoes). Nelia gave Gertrude a story that the money she received from MASAF was stolen with traditional medicine (so just disappeared from the knot she made in her chitenje) when she went to Balaka to buy food.

About granddaughter of Magda people complained/gossiped that she had many boyfriends while she was still at school. Now that she finished school she has gone to join her mother in Lilongwe.

Naima told Gertrude that her mother Balakasi now has cellphone, but didn’t say how she got it. The father of Joy came one day to give Livia some money to take care of Joy, but he didn’t find them at home. Livia and Phingi had gone to Phingi’s friend who had a potential marriage partner for Livia. When coming back Phingi complained that he hadn’t left the money with someone else? May be he wants to get back with you, she said to Livia.

Gertrude and I were wondering about benefit of current boyfriend of Venesi. Jasmine had commented earlier
when Venesi passed by with new boyfriend that ‘this is how men in this village are’ they come to eat the maize that they did not helped to cultivate, and then the relationship ends again. When Gertrude heard that this new boyfriend wanted money from Venesi, she thought Jasmine’s words may be true. “And Venesi has a lot of cotton, and enough maize on her field to feed her children. I don’t understand why she takes this big responsibility of also feeding an extra man.

Sofia came saying she wanted to check how her pumpkin is growing which she planted at the collapsed house of Kingsley. Had seen somebody with a full grown pumpkin already, but now saw hers are not ready yet. In morning had eaten phala, asked to leave them some seeds of the variety I brought from Lilongwe. And asked what GVH & chief had come to do yesterday, Gertrude stayed vague, saying they came to discuss something.

Rains from early morning till next morning!

Gertrude: some people prefer to eat heavy in the evening (if they have for only 1 x nsima per day), because the night is long, while during day one can eat small/light bits at various times to keep stomach filled.

Gertrude: people are surprised that Jane found somebody who will marry her, probably because he is from Balaka, so he doesn’t know that she has moving around a lot with boys. Somebody from this village could not marry her.

Gertrude: at borehole women were wondering (in Jan) whether they would not die this hunger season, considering the wide spread lack of food. People are now very happy, Gertrude suspects, because they had not expected to be eating maize so soon.

husband of Elube is working in Balaka these days, building at hospital, comes home at 6pm every evening.

Blessings & Fissa, Holy, Magda, Naima still have maize from own harvest, not selling though.

Jasmine and Teleza pointed out to complaining women that I had only come to learn about their daily lives, not to give money or medicine. So why don’t you just start a BS or do ganyu, said Jasmine, Pamela told Gertrude that if indeed I will help Chikondi, “we will come to beg too!”

GVH came by to greet, saying that at ADMARC they have started selling maize at 45mk/kg. First of all the chiefs can come and buy, then other people (she bought 50kg). Also [GVH] said that she is tired of taking husband to hospital, therefore now on her way to find some traditional medicine for him (walking with chikwanje). She [GVH] was now finished planting her maize, earlier she had complained to Gertrude that people here are lazy, not cultivating at dimba. Said that she doesn’t know whether the chiefs will gather today following the massage from chief Mudzi A because of the rain today.
Granddaughter of Jasmine had been sent to put a bucket under our iron sheet roof to catch rain water, just like Gertrude is doing. Gertrude is surprised that not more women come to put their buckets under our roof.

Livia used to go to Balaka for tailoring 3x/week: Monday, Wednesday & Saturday, but they have still not given the promised sewing machine and she is now tired of going up and down all the time, goes sometimes.

Christina is pregnant, we saw, Gertrude says that at borehole people commented on fact that her last born is still very young, and already she is pregnant again. Rather than fact that she has no husband, at least at time of interview her husband had disappeared to Mzuzu to marry another wife there.

Livia came back from tailoring course in Balaka at 6pm and asked Gertrude to keep a new skirt and new shoes from her new boyfriend there (the one that she met on her way back from [nearest trading center] where she went to see her ex-husband, who then proposed to her and gave her his telephone number). He works in a china shop in Balaka, Gertrude doubts whether he may have stolen the items from the shop where he works because it is only mid month, not yet end of month when he will get his salary. Livia afraid that her mother will see the clothes, first has to tell her that she has this boyfriend, then tomorrow she can show them. The man is serious, she says, already buying her clothes, but she hasn’t told him yet that she has children. “Ah! That is why you went without chitenje today!” laughed Gertrude, dressing like a girl, that has no children yet. Other days she takes Hana with her, but today left her at house.

February 12, 2009 Thursday

“Pumpkin is stronger like nsima”, said Gertrude when eating the first ripe pumpkin for breakfast this morning. People like it better than green maize,

yesterday evening at 7:30pm the husband of Amila had come to beg ufa, saying he doesn’t have anything at home. Gertrude told him we don’t have, expecting he wouldn’t stop coming if we gave. She suggested this morning that we should go to Amila and ask if it was true. Since we were the first ones to plant pumpkin, we are the first ones to eat now, and we have many. By next week others will also be eating from their field, guesses Gertrude. I suggested we take a pumpkin to Amila, but then realize it would cause problems, which Gertrude confirmed. If we walk all the way there with a pumpkin everybody will see that we went to give her one. May be better tell her to come and get one, and urge her not to tell anyone.

We found her not at home though, went to ADMARC at [nearest trading center], also chief Mudzi B had gone there. Jeneti was weeding her potatoes. Esnart came to tell this morning that she is charging phones now. Met Rosemary on the road, looked unhealthy, thin bad skin.
Mr Ntawanga showed us the field (1/4 acre) where 1 variety of ICRISAT g/nut has been planted (but late as the seeds came late 15 Dec). Even though initially 6 people had been appointed to each grow a certain small number of ridges, this field has been cultivated by the couple living next to it. The woman told us she had planned to grow maize and sabola on this plot, but planted these somewhere else now. The deal is that 35kg has to be given to ICRISAT for further spreading while the rest can be kept (I wonder whether she or those appointed 6 will take those g/nuts). They think app 90kg can be harvested. Weeding has been a problem, the woman said, since she had to do it all alone, ICRISAT did not supply money for ganyu. Termites are also a problem, they just write down ‘nsinjiro’, said Mr Ntawanga. The woman was instructed by Mr Ntawanga (ridges 25cm apart, 1 hand width between the phando’s, only 1 seed per phando), who had been instructed by Mr Chikombo who had been to Balaka to receive instructions from ICRISAT. “The people from Lilongwe” = ICRISAT had promised to come by yesterday, but they didn’t, we also passed by a maize field from the wife of bike repair with maize trial from Bunda college. The crops weren’t pretty though, so she had not received plates with the names of the varieties like Mr Ntawanga has. Florence is the other one who was selected for the trial, with a field next to road. After harvest they can tell which variety they like best and then a distribution project will be started, says Mr Ntawanga. Bunda college also gave some g/nut varieties to test to the 3 participants in Mudzi A.

At this house I saw the goat khola which they built some months ago had collapsed. FIDP had not sent the iron sheets that they had promised, some have gone to the FIDP office, said Mr Ntawanga, to beg for them and they were told that they will receive them in the next round in April. Then too chicken, bee and pig activities will start. The village has already received a new male goat of a different kind to be multiply with the females already distributed. FIDP’s aim is that eventually every HH in the village will have goats. Another male goat will still be send for Mudzi A 2, there they also did not receive iron sheets, so they put on grass themselves. In Mudzi A I they didn’t, “because lacking materials”. Still Mr Ntawanga emphasized that FIDP is really helping them.

We continued to grocery to pick up Gertrude’s telephone and give pictures but no one was there selling (app 11am). Mr Dauda from the phone charger has been told that he has been elected as vice-chairman of the village development committee. He didn’t even attend the meeting himself, so after being told he went to GVH to ask what this was all about, and especially why the previous chairman stopped prematurely; a chairman usually stays on for 5yrs, but this one was only in his 3th yr. GVH made clear that she wants one who listens to her. Mr Dauda gave example of the tree planting project, 39 people were to be selected from each vilage, but the one responsible for agroforestry at district level said that 35 could be put to work and the remaining 4 salaries would be for him. GVH also took 13 and somebody else also some. So eventually a much smaller number could actually work, not everybody could join. This is bad and should be addressed by the VDC who work at group level, receiving instructions from government and organization about projects to be undertaken within the group of villages. The VDL then tells the GVH who tells all the chiefs, is GVH in VDC? But in practice the GVH has power over the VDC, concluded Mr Dauda from fact that she had been able to have the previous chairman replaced. He doesn’t see any benefit if he is only to listen to the GVH, had her say that they will both listen to each other, he plans to gather a meeting with all chiefs as witnesses where she will repeat this.
Gertrude confirms that people talk a lot about what they have been eating.

Tumanene came to ask me if I can buy her a new face telephone next time that I go to Lilongwe. Here they cost 400mk while there 250-300mk. Sure, but not ask your husband in SA to send? Ah, nobody coming this way anytime soon. But Gertrude later said; she received a phone from her husband only recently but already now it looks very ugly, she is probably afraid that husband will see this.

Livia sent Fatima this morning to Gertrude with little note saying that she is going to buy units and will come to use Gertrude’s phone later on. However, she came later, saying that she failed to go and buy and gave 80mk to Gertrude for when we go to grocery = 50 units.

Lucia came at 12:30 to further learn how to make a shawl for baby.

Gertrude showed me how to pick pumpkin leaves and clean them. Earlier we picked some mseula from our garden, which I later peeled with Lucia and Livia who visited. Evelin also joined us with daughter. All knitted; Evelin and daughter also had their hair braided by Gertrude. Livia is making decorations which Gertrude learned from Lucia. She wants to make 10 of them and sell at [nearest tradingcenter], Lucia is learning how to make baby shawl, Evelin baby shoe.

Evelin soon started asking whether we eat and cultivate mseula in Netherlands, so I told her no, no maize, no nsima, but especially potatoes and wheat. Showed her the calendar with typical Dutch pictures as well as the picture of my family. Later I also served stroopwafels which I had brought from the Netherlands. Ah, I was very happy to be bonding, to have some genuine social contact, to have people ask me questions in stead of other way round. Whether all my sisters work, whether we live in 1 house, at what age we start having children, how many children most people have. How we avoid having many children after reaching the amount we want. What happens when a man catches his wife cheating on him. I said that usually leads to divorce, here sometimes divorce, sometimes they talk about it and continue their marriage. I said that can also happen in NL, if woman says she is sorry and won’t do it again. But that it is usually the man who cheats, and here? Here 50-50, answered Lucia. Evelin asked if it is true that if you have sex just after menstruating you cannot get pregnant. Then Gertrude brought up condoms, after which Livia said: sindipange, and brought up the usual, can’t enjoy a sweet with it wrap (“sumamva kukoma”). Boys here don’t allow, say they can’t enjoy sex like that, Evelin just laughed, Lucia stayed quite. Livia said boy and girl should both get their blood tested, and when negative can just have sex, no need for condom. Livia also mentioned “kuthira pansi” as a birth control method = leave church before singing. But also that boys don’t like, can’t enjoy they say, and refuse, if you ask about condoms, boys say you don’t love them - chikondi. Livia has never used, Funny, I was confused because they asked about birth control after having children, while amongst any peers the issue is rather before being in time before fertility stops. I hope we can discuss more tomorrow when going to have blood tested with Livia. Livia asked if there are also prostitutes in NL.

Tinenenji also passed by and said that she will not stop coming even though people say that she only comes to beg soap.
When we visited Pamela we sat inside “m’thunzi”, to be in shadow. Sometimes people can also be ashamed because they haven’t swept etc.

Then Gertrude also asked, as I had asked her about how much is paid to the chief for marriage. Total amount is 700mk, said Lucia: 300 for GVH, 200 for chief and 200 for parents. Besides this there is a meeting with the ankhoswe during which the newly weds are being advised (about what?). Sometimes at same day, especially when girl is pregnant which is often the case, then they hurry, but not necessarily. If a couple starts to live together without paying this, the chief won’t help when they are fighting and won’t arrange the funeral when their child dies, but he doesn’t go to claim his/her money. The amount is not the same everywhere, can be up to 1000mk.

When I asked Lucia why she stopped mandasi BS, she just answered “ndaduka”, had no money. How do you find money now? Ganyu, but is ganyu to be found these days? No, but at weeding time there was.

I asked Gertrude whether it was just her assumption that Tinenenji wants children but fails to get them, or whether she heard other or Tinenenji mention this? Maybe she is preventing, I said. Ah, according to village life, I don’t think she can be preventing... Especially since her husband already has a child elsewhere, she has to give him a child soon too. It’s probably like Chisoni, who thinks that somebody is bewitching her because she fails to get pregnant.

Cholera is coming this way, had first reached Lilongwe (from Zimbabwe?), Gertrude’s mother got it few days ago and 6 people from village around here have died from it. Gertrude is extra careful now with making sure that flies are kept away. I will make a bottle with added to water to regulary disinfect our hands.

During day sun, at end of afternoon bit of rain.

Friday February 13 2009

In night some rain (the loud noise on iron sheet roof wakes me up), morning starts with rain too.

When Lucia and Livia visited yesterday, the 3 of us sat outside peeling mseula while Gertrude cleaned our lunch pots and plates because afraid of cholera. She yelled to Livia that she should be chatting with me, first thing that Livia asked is whether we shall go to the VCT centre together.

Livia came to use my phone, as I had told Gertrude that Livia can use the many bonus minutes that I saved but hardly use. She have to use before 9am, Livia came before 6am on her way to borehole, but I was not out of bed yet. Came back on way back from borehole and [Livia] called her boyfriend in Balaka, saying that she won’t be able to come and sleep (sindibwera kudzagona, koma lamulungu) but will arrange to come on Sunday at 4pm. Doesn’t like going to the shop where he works, therefore
after knocking off, he then asked to talk to Livia’s friend = Gertrude to whom he said: ndakonzeka kumusamalira, sindimunamiza ayi - I am ready to take care of her, I will not deceive her, but he still doesn’t know that she has 2 children he would have to take care too!

Passing by Livia on our way back from grocery Gertrude told her to come see us so as to tell her that we failed to buy units but she can use my free bonus minutes. She [Livia] said she’d come later because first had to cook for father. Today we were to go to C. clinic for blood testing at about 8am, but now she first has to wash clothes for father.

People have received a bottle with chloride (app ½ ltr) to add to water to avoid cholera, but most don’t like to use it, says Gertrude. They find that it smells bad.

Mother of Gertrude when still at boarding school used to sell mandasi during holidays, but what about older people, mothers of Eveles, Alma, Chenawe? Is it a relatively recent development that are trying to find their own money, or has this always been part of (matrilineal) culture? Gertrude says husband cannot always provide everything that a woman wishes for, or some things may embarrass her to ask for, eg daughters cannot ask their fathers for underwear. Even though they have their own income, they still want a husband, Gertrude said convinced, to add to own income. It’s difficult to find enough income, but still, those that are at the edge of survival. Well, always have option to kuoda, may need be through once having a chibwenzi.

Sofia had asked Gertrude if she could take some nkhwani from our bush, which Gertrude allowed. Sofia went to take when we had gone to hospital. Chenawe saw her take from our field and reprimanded her, when we passed by Chenawe she greeted us, but didn’t say anything about Sofia. A had also wanted to take a pumpkin, she told us while cleaning a dengu-top full of nkhwani, but didn’t because of Chenawe. When we arrived home she sent her daughter (very skinny) to come and take pumpkin, because she wants to keep the little ufa she has for eating tonight.

On our way to C. clinic passed by Chenawe & husband too who had between them a dengu-top full of maize, harvested from their own field, grinded with some sort of grateer, later after some drying in the dengu-top will make nsima. Not ideal because like this it takes much more maize to make same nsima, says Gertrude. But at least to be eating something, when Gertrude told her that we were going to C. clinic to get our blood tested, Chenawe asked kachirombo [HIV]? Why? You are just staying! (without husband, added Gto explain her comment to me).

Walking to C. village with Livia I asked what made her decide to go for blood testing now. She answered that Gertrude had told her that it is good to go for blood testing when she was ill recently. Discussed with boyfriend? No, not talked about this, he did not encourage her, she did not encourage him to go. She though it better to first check herself, said she would tell him if she would be found positive, but was not very scared because she had had a test when pregnant. If she had not had test, ii, then she would have been afraid now, wouldn’t tell her mother though, if found positive. But well, she would just accept it and think “zimachitika”. Do they send you to Balaka then? She asked us, she was surprised to hear that in NL people also go for VCT, thought AIDS was only in Malawi. Following our conversation yesterday I added that in NL people also avoid pregnancy by using condoms, early
withdrawal, “safe days”, pills, injection. She prefers injection, she then brought up. But on our way back she said she has been to a traditional doctor to prevent ever becoming pregnant again. I asked whether she thinks that many people here know how to prevent HIV. Ah they know; refuse when somebody proposes or use a condom, but why does the disease still spread if people know? Most men don’t like to use condom, saying the oil gives them sores and coughing. They may discuss and agree with you first, to be using condoms, but then later refuse. Many women find it difficult to then walk away, because the boy will show her the money that she will get afterwards and then it is difficult to loose that money, better do this and win the money. Others because they don’t want to loose the love of this man. When I told about how I refused to have sex with Feye without condom before he he got the guts to have himself surprised, eh, you really forced him! I suggested that is sometimes difficult for a woman to refuse sex without condom because she herself also wants to have sex, but this was not confirmed by Livia, rather mentioned again not waiting to loose the money or his love. Says she used condom once, soon after somebody proposed to her, but Gertrude doubts whether this is true. Went before to get tested with brother and sister, then her sister came out without saying anything but immediately took a bike taxi home. The same year she died, when I asked about the condom wraps that we have been seeing laying around she seemed surprised, asked where, probably doesn’t know what they look like. Apparently some use them, she just said.

At the clinic we were helped by a woman, the man who helped us last time stay under the tree outside. There were no other people, later I saw in the book that the last ones had been tested on the 10th of Feb, since November in total 371 tests done (including repeat visits) of which 23 turned out positive. In Nov, 214 tests (14 positive), Dec, 47 tests (4 positive), Jan 55 tests (5 positive), Feb 26 tests so far (2 positive). Of all 23 positives 16 female, 5 male. The woman knew these numbers by heart, except for Feb she had to count in her book. Also Female & Male she had to count, the large number in Nov was because of the campaign through radio, posters at trading centres, a microphone car, chiefs and churches. She didn’t seem to keep track of the fact that Gertrude and I came for repeat check, as advised the first time after 3 months. She had the 3 of us come in and quite brutally (with force) took three drops of blood from our middle finger, then we left the room for Livia to be concluded. Livia later told Gertrude that she had told the woman that she has a boyfriend after which the woman advised her to also take this boyfriend for blood testing and come back to get condoms when they want to start sleeping together because if you sleep with him without condom you will contract EDZI (or at least that’s what Livia made of it). She wasn’t offered condoms now, after coming out I asked Livia whether she was happy, which she confirmed, but later she asked Gertrude that the woman asked her whether she suffered from malaria and diarrhoea often and whether this inquiry meant that she in fact was HIV positive. Seemed uncertain of her status, however I had seen the book and thus knew for sure that she is negative. Gertrude told her later, then Livia said that she had not been sure whether they may be hiding the truth from her.

Phingi came to see the pictures of my family which I had yesterday shown to Sofia, Livia and Lucia. Enjoyed watching them, I am very much resemble my mother, and I should give her a picture to remember me. I told her I will when I leave, when about to go she asked me how the trip to [clinic] was?, whether we got our blood tested and whether mother of Joy also got her blood tested and whether she is fine? Bwino? Alibe [she doesn’t have it]? She should keep her leg closed, she then commented. Not open all the time (spreading knees and feet outwards, but closed “kubisa” - *hide*(with hand between legs on vagina). She already has an awiri popanda mwamuna [2 kids without husband], but I asked, how can she find another husband if she refuses to sleep with them? She should go work at [large commercial estate] to feed her children
herself, said Phingi. After she left Gertrude laughed; first she is saying that Livia should get married so that at least somebody is taking care of her when Phingi will die now she says she should not marry but work at [large commercial estate], when going to [clinic] Phingi had grabbed some money from under her chitenje and given to Livia to buy paraffin and a mandasi for Joy (10mk).

NB: I continued notes in laptop!

Feb 13, 2009 Friday [some rain in morning and late afternoon]

At the clinic Gertrude cheated the health officer that she was interested in buying the decoration that the woman was knitting, but actually just wanted to ‘steal’ the pattern. Asked pen and paper from me to quickly draw the design.

When Gertrude was called in for her results the woman just gave the result after which they went to discuss the price: how many do you want? Just 1 or 2. Smaller ones are 150, this one 200 MK. Then when I came for result the woman told me that the best behavior is to abstain. I should have said that I want children, and she what she would have answered then. To Gertrude the woman just said that she should come back if she chooses to do sex in the meantime.

When heading back from [clinic], I asked Livia whether her second child had been planned - since she said that she prefers taking injection as form of birth control and went when I was here last time. She said she wanted it indeed - but I wonder. She now said that she has been to a traditional doctor to take medication to never have children anymore. But what about this new boyfriend, Gertrude inquired. He surely will want a child of his own with you, especially since you have children with others - which she says she has informed him about, and he said it was no problem. She wanted to get married by next year so that she can still take breastfeed Hana before leaving her with Phingi. But the boy (22 yrs) insisted on marrying sooner, within 4 months. Which would mean that they marry, but Livia will remain in the house of mother until Hana is old enough to be left with grandmother. Then Livia will move to husband in Balaka. Cannot take child because men can be mean to children from other fathers. Will Phingi allow to take care of your children, I asked? She encourages me to get married, so that I have someone to take care of me when she dies... The husband-to-be says he does not want children. Jaha, that’s what he says now, Gertrude laughed. Then, again, she apologized for asking so many questions. Livia said it was fine, she had learned from us too. Father of first child was younger than Livia (1988 & 1987). Gertrude thinks Livia was lying about traditional medicine and already having told boyfriend about kids.

When we reached Mudzi A Livia turned off to go to Suset. It seems the potential relationship with one of Suset’s costumers is still worked on. Recently Suset had also come to secretly discuss something with Livia, said Gertrude.

Gertrude said that on radio it is said that many women feel ashamed to carry a condom in their handbag, because when boys can see they will say that she is a prostitute. Either planning to have sex with them or otherwise with someone else.

At Sundays Gertrude often went to youth days organized by church, where sport & bao games would be organized, speeches and drama plays. Especially these last ones were liked. Many did not listen to the words [message], but just liked to watch. Here it was said that it is good to use condoms. I was surprised, church encouraging condoms? Gertrude says the speakers/actors were youth and said that they knew that youth cannot manage to abstain.
Over lunch (rice, egg plant and the msewula we harvested yesterday - while to the clinic Gertrude had left them on fire to cook, and asked Sofia to add water) I said I felt sorry for Sofia. All her children from the same man, and then being left to fend for herself (and kids), being chased by g'mother, and every now and then being threatened to be chased by mother-in-law. Husband married another now who gave him a child and he recently said this was the last support I will give you. Sofia was very angry, telling Gertrude that she had received proposals, but always refused, not knowing that this husband could leave her like this. One of those proposers is now in South Africa, taking good care of his wife back home...

Passed by Chief Mudzi B to give her sugar and 2 bars of soap, as thanks for staying in her vlg. Saw her sister Kondwani with a bottle and I asked whether it was the chloride that everybody had received, but no, mankhwala for cotton at 100 MK per bottle for those in cotton club. Those who are not in a club pay more. Clubs are organized by cotton buying company and gather whenever the company wants to spread info. She couldn't answer me why some people don't join club, for her it was her first year to join.

Yesterday, when talking about NL Lucia asked about school, I told her that we go to school from 4-16 yrs and some continue after. Is that secondary? There they go fast, explained Gertrude. Livia commented how her cousin is in standard 2 while already going to school for years.

Tinenenji, Ada and Dorica came to knit. When Elube passed by to borehole she yelled to Tinenenji: He daughter-in-law (agwekwe - ChiYao), why didn't you come to help me on the field today? Tinenenji yelled back that she will come tomorrow. Gertrude interpreted this as Elube being happy with relationship between son (ex-husband Fatima) and Tinenenji. Then to Dorica, Elube said: And you are just quite there... So it seems a publicly know fact that Dorica was also with her son, as Livia told Gertrude. Fatima came to see her ex-husband too today.

Gertrude expects people to be harvesting by beginning of March, bola. But, I then said, if they harvest early, they will run out of it sooner too. Gertrude thinks not, though, because people will be eating from their fields until harvest, either green maize or drying for ufa (and then using much more maize for same nsima). So the actually, the sooner the better. People will probably first be storing in house, remembering the recent thefts, but later in nhokwe.

Chief F. said he can't catch Ntaba since he is his son-in-law (married to relative of him).

Gertrude asked Jasmine to teach her how to make clay pots, lot of work, says Jasmine, but will teach us tomorrow if she finds time.

Chenawe, chief Mudzi B & Amila were all drying maize from this season to make premature ufa. Drying for the kennels to become hard then to maize mill. But if this would be done with all maize it would quickly rot or at least taste better, also much more ufa is needed for same amount of nsima. So people wait for maize cobs to be really dry and hard before harvesting them. Amila said that the woman living in front of her (married in Zambia) was also drying like this already.

Chief Mudzi B recently passed by with a lot of maize for mother who had received money from a son in SA. Chief Mudzi B has some sores on face and chifuwa, Amila and baby infected eyes, Amila was ashamed that she hadn’t kept some sugarcane for us, she sold for 150mk yesterday. Had gone to [nearest tradingcenter] to buy the cheap maize at ADMARC, but found it all sold, then bought 1kg at 80mk.
If Phingi will take care of Livia’s children while she herself goes to stay with new husband in Balaka, she will leave all her maize for her mother, she and her husband will buy maize in town.

Breakfast, popcorn, from different kind of maize!

Sofia has not done any ganyu, even hired herself after receiving MASAF money. Just depended on what her husband sent (1 time he sent mangos to be selling). It’s not because there is no one who can babysit her kids while she is working because they always just play around the compound when she works on her field.

Maize has to be boiled for app 1 hour, mseula 1,5 hours, maize cobs (now) 40-60 minutes.

Eveles sent granddaughter with many pumpkins for us, we sent most of them back so that they eat themselves. Gertrude concluded that others have now also started eating pumpkins.

**February 14, 2009 Saturday** [NB more notes in laptop]

Feb 14, Saturday

When Jasmine and (orphaned granddaughter) Trinity had gone to Balaka to buy maize at Admarc there, relative of Jasmine’s husband had complained about how Jasmine just leaves her husband alone for day and night (spending night at Admarc queue), to take care of himself, “image!”. They spend night at Jasmine's son in Balaka who sells second hand clothes - but complains there is little business these days. Prices at Admarc Balaka and [nearest tradingcenter] are same, why going all the way to Balaka, Gertrude wonders [more likely to succeed?]. Others also commented that one spends money for food when traveling far, better buying maize from vendors near by, for higher price.

Sofia passed by in early morning to GVH. Her husband had still not sent the last money that he had said he would give for maize, so she went to borrow at GVH. GVH had told her she better works hard to build her own house and divorce because there is no benefit in this marriage - she is just taking care of her children alone. Sofia hoped to borrow 1000MK. Came back with money indeed, but didn’t say how much. Later when she came to have hair braided by Gertrude she said GVH has given her 500MK - gift, not loan!

We went to see Eveles at her rice dambo field, she was weeding for second time. Helped her while asking questions about past. When I managed to weed properly she said that my husband would by mine fully, because I could now manage to cultivate a rice field. She first was disappointed that Feye did not come along to help her in the field too, he would have been more of a help because stronger. When she harvests, she wants to cook him rice, she said again, and she will buy him eggs and oil all by herself. She also said that he must have married another by now, since I am away from him for so long. First objected to us helping her: growing rice is for old women, not for young girls. Didn’t really answer my question WHY young women don't cultivate rice. Said that for example her g'daughters refuse to help her, complaining that she gives away most of the rice after harvest. Indeed, Eveles confirms that after harvest she will first cook for the family that she stays with, then give all her friends who have helped her with things, and keep the rest for food. Doesn’t cultivate cotton - too much work (applying chemical every 2 weeks, weeding 4 or 5 times). Rice needs no other care than weeding twice until
harvest.

I asked her whether in past women were also doing BS, or whether that is something new. In past also, eg her mother brewed beer (father traded fish and grew tobacco for cash, was able to hire ganyu for tobacco field - Eveles herself also sells tobacco). Mother spent her income herself, eg on clothes for children etc (but she did keep some beer for husband to drink with friends). Parents stayed together until father died, then mother stayed alone. They were cousins. Other women would trade ufa or groundnuts, going from Balaka to Chiradzulu - transport was difficult then. For very low prices compared to now. But less trading then, people would give each other, not sell. If somebody was hungry, they would just receive food from others. Less longing for wealth, pursuing of enrichment, money. Most people just had one pair of clothes, washing them at the lake and waiting for them to dry. Those who had 2 pieces of clothes were considered rich. But nowadays people are after money, “akufuna kulemera.” They want more clothes etc, at least 4 pieces. In past it was much easier to eat meat, everybody had their own goats and cows. [How come people could eat more meat even though they did less BS?] Maybe because people have stopped appreciating God, thanking him by offering thobwa after harvest. All villagers would gather at one place under big tree, brew beer and offer it to god by pouring it in a clay pot buried in the earth. But now they have stopped doing that and God is not happy because of that. People are just busy with money, and God is not happy with that either. Therefore there is less rain and less food now. And because people are after money there is this disease now. [Why don't women do BS if they want money - they know the risk of AIDS?] Lazy: they think they will spend long hours at market, mchedwa, to find little money, while it is quick and more if somebody just gives them the money. They want nice clothes. In past there were less divorces. Herself, she married very young and therefore she could not get pregnant yet. But people used to assume that when you marry, children come. So her husband divorced and married another, they had a child but child died. Then the man went to Nairobi to fight for 8 years. When he came back he wanted to marry Eveles again, who first refused but eventually agreed. Then he went to Nairobi again to fight for another 2 years after which they started to have children. Gave birth to 10, but 9 died. One of her daughters because of AIDS, she had a husband who moved around a lot, sleeping with other women and he infected her. Her children died before they reached 1 year when she realized that she had become infected and died. She refused first marriage proposals, but allowed this one because he had a big radio.

Two women came by, relatives, talking about a persistent dream that Eveles keeps having of a relative telling her that the daughter of one of the women must be initiated. Eveles said “We should all contribute 5MK to add to 100MK to pay for salt for ndiwo and my friend who will assist me to advise and sing the required songs.” “But where are we going to find 5MK in this hunger season,” the women complained. If we don’t do it I will keep having the same dream over and over, said Eveles. Means people still believe in things of past, commented Gertrude on our way back from field.

Daughter-in-law (Tumbuka, Eveles comments) wants to move to [tiny crossroads market]. Her eldest daughter wants to marry but only paid money to arrange the wedding to her g’mother in [tiny crossroads market], not to Eveles, and Eveles is agry about that. Told son & wife that they should discuss these things as a family, then wife got angry and wants to move. Fine with Eveles, she will just take care of her own. The couple is still discussing whether man will also move or stay with mother.

Said that GVH came one morning very early, but Eveles was already in her field. Then GVH said she had come to buy some rice, but when Eveles asked she said she had only 20MK. “Just came to steal my rice!”

Talking about the past reminded her of a 1952 Southern Rhodesia coin that she carries around in
string of cloth around her waist. Some use these coins for traditional medicine, she said. Wants to be able to show her grandchildren. With that small coin you could buy meat, fish...

Many women gathered at our house in afternoon: Chief Mudzi B & sister Kondwani, Grace, Dorica, Sofia, Blessings, Chisoni, Lovely, Vanessa (woman who went to Blantyre to give birth, wife of g'son of GVH who did lot of ganyu round our house), 3 g'daughters of Eveles. To knit and to have hair braided by Gertrude. Blessings had brought the 2 zitenje that were left of the 9 sent by husband from SA to show and hopefully sell. Sold 7 already at 800MK, especially to women. She also wanted a picture from her young son, who cried though. The women complained about how their children follow them everywhere, bothering them (crying etc). They also discussed that husband of Amila was moving around begging ufa from all women. Lovely remembered how they used to play that they were knitting, using grass sprieten before Dorica was born. Chief Mudzi B was laughed at for not even being able to properly hold needle and thread. Gertrude encouraged them to all come again tomorrow before they forgot what they had learned, in stead of only coming sporadically, which some of them promised. I asked them how they compared this year’s njala to other years. This year was bad, they said. Because of the erratic rainfall last year people had less maize than usual. However, it was not as bad as 2001/2002, when they had money but there was no maize to be found anywhere. “M’mudzi muno mulibe njala chifukwa cha MASAF koma midzi ina...” At least here people got some money through MASAF to be buying maize. So besides green maize some are at least eating nsima or phala, while in other villages only green maize now.

The MASAF field is very small! Could easily have been done by 3-4 people in few mornings. So indeed, most days the women just gathered to chat... It seems only about 10-20 trees have been planted.

Grace had bought a jersey for daughter before she left for Mzuzu at 400 MK. With money (2000-3000MK) she received from a man at one of the election meetings. Innocent had commented that they are not related, so they must be in relationship, considering that he gives her money. Now she would like to buy the poncho that Gertrude closhed, at 600MK. Where does money come from??

Livia came back from Balaka in dark, around 7 PM - Phingi angry for coming home so late. Livia told us she had indeed called her boyfriend at 4 and met with him and went to buy the thread that Gertrude and I ordered. Bcoz of rain they went to his house to chat until she started cycling back home. They agreed that he would pay for a bike taxi coming and going (total 400-500 MK) tomorrow - his free day, so she can some to visit him the whole day. She says she told him about her blood test, and that he said he would go on Monday or Tuesday. Gertrude asked whether they will be sleeping together, Livia laughed. Being together all day, of course you will, how could you otherwise have gotten this last baby?, said Gertrude. Ah, I will tell you all about it tomorrow, answered Livia...

Shop clerks like Livia’s new boy (friend) make 3000-3500mk/month, Gertrude read in paper that they want their salaries raised to 4000-5000mk, but doesn’t know whether they succeeded.

Calling at telephone bureau costs 50mk per minute, always paying full minutes. Livia is again not taking Hana to Balaka as she used to.

Husband of GVH and grandsons came for shelter at our khonde when they were spraying their cotton and rain came. While here the boys discussed that Rosemary & daughters have been told to leave the village
because Ntaba can still come here saying that he wants to visit his mother-in-law. They will probably wait until after harvest though. The boys were wondering whether the family will move back to Chilipa or just move to F. village.

February 15, Sunday [NB more note in laptop] - no rains, blue sky

Feb 15, Sunday: Blue sky since days

At 9 AM Livia came to tell that she cheated mother that she will go to J. village vlg to see brother, but actually planning to go to Balaka to meet boyfriend. Then mother said that she wants Livia to go to Balaka later today to buy maize early in the morning tomorrow. Young cousin Talina will go with her - probably to check on Livia, after coming home so late yesterday. Livia happy, because this will also allow her to meet boyfriend. Will meet him in afternoon, but spend night at brother's house, because afraid they will find out. Boyfriend rents house within same fence as shop where he works, paying 10000MK, with electricity. On radio announced that shop clerks salaries should increase to at least 5000MK, so it seems they must have, otherwise can't pay such high rent. The shoes and skirt he bought her must have costed him 900-1000MK, Gertrude estimates. On Wednesday he will finish giving her clothes until they marry, Livia said (?), then she knows he is really serious. She is clearly happy, “to have found boyfriend who gives her so much” Gertrude made of it (clothes, transport costs). Yesterday evening mother had kept no nsima for her, because she was so late. Made some phala herself.

Some days ago Sandala passed by to greet: has stopped making mandasi now: no mpamba. I wonder whether they have been doing ganyu on the end...

Chloride has already been distributed twice, last month and this month. By health officers from [nearest trading center], who come to weigh children twice a month under the big tree of Mudzi B. Everybody received, but nobody tried to get more, not interested.

In morning Sofia passed on her way to her mbatata field to weed. Everybody is growing sweet potatoes now, although they didn't mention this in interviews - probably just forgot, thinks Gertrude.

Eveles said that the pumpkins that g'daughter came to bring us where received from someone else and to be taken to Alma, not us. This morning one of her g'daughters even came to beg some pumpkins from our garden. So they have not yet started eating from own garden.

Gertrude tells about lobola in Dedza (which also happens among Tumbuka, but not Yao) = Ngoni. Man has to pay either money or cattle to parents of his wife-to-be plus at the engagement ceremony 2 zitenje, shoes, plates, bowl, for washing hands, clothes and cup to fiancé. Usually she gives the ziwiya to parents, but they are supposed to be for her HH. She is told how to use them to serve her husband, kneeling down when giving him his food. Also among Yao girls are taught to behave like that but most don’t do it. Also in Dedza some don’t do it, but more than here, definitely more. Then, in Dedza, men also have to build a house near the family of wife, friends and relatives of man help him. In Gertrude’s home village most are still in their first or maybe second marriage, so there seem to be less divorces than her, possibly because of the high investments made when marrying. Lobola does not need to be paid back when divorcing, because of the children that the wife (‘s family) still have to take care of. Usually marry around the age of 20, but Gertrude’s mother recently told her that now even from age 17, many have “unexpected pregnancies” before marriage which sometimes lead to marriage but more often not. When marrying another man eventually, the first born child(ren) usually stay with the wife’s mother, only sometimes with her and new husband.
Went to Jasmine to ask for some mbatata roots/stems to plant, very easy. People just find these growing in the field where last year potatoes were grown. The stems can just be planted like that, basi, she was kubandira and kupalira her cotton, big field. Then walked with us through her maize fields on the other side of the road to reach some potatoes growing amidst maize. One part of the maize field had small yellow plants overgrown with weeds and without cobs, she had not have enough fertilizer for this part and therefore also neglected to weed. Why didn’t you use Innocent’s fertilizer, Gertrude asked. Ah, can’t tell her to give me.

Sofia was drying thelere leaves and vegetables (cut into slides) and nkhwani leaves and flowers. You have to cook the leaves for about 10 minutes and then leave them to dry in the sun (today blue sky after days of rain). The boiling water that she threw away was brown, full of nutrients, I am afraid.

In afternoon we will go with Jasmine to collect clay so that mawa afternoon we start making clay pots. She was saying that her daughter who lives in Zomba (why/) used to exchange such home made clay pots for rice after people harvested their maize.

Is there a gender difference in food (in)security? What could such a difference be? Fields usually belong to the woman, although many men also have their own fields. Sometimes working each on own, sometimes both working on both. Chief Mudzi A and Hamra separately, Thokozani & Levison together, (but often Thokozani alone) husband of Jasmine often alone (but Jasmine planted, now kubandira and kupalira), Rosemary worked on cotton field of husband, Florence & husband together, Amila + husband together (after divorce discussed that they will share the harvest), GVH & husband usually on separate fields (he mostly on cotton field around our house, seems to have his own money separately from wife). Hilda alone, Elube only with kids, Sweetness often alone, Magda & husband together with ganyu. Gertrude says that if a husband and wife worked together on field and divorce, share harvest. But if husband not helped on field or by paying ganyu he will not receive part of the harvest, may be like new boyfriend of Venesi - quickly finding new partner where to eat. Fatima went to home village to work on her field, while husband worked on his field here.

Cut egg-plant,

Lunch: kusonkha moto, put in pot with water (½ tambula = pink cup) and some salt. After some boiling add tomatoes, another pot: bit of oil to grease, egg, stirring until dry & scrambled then add tomatoes on top, no stirring, put lit back on. Meanwhile keep fire going, then stir & finished. 1 ½ cup of water, bring to boil, add 1 ½ cup of rice, when water has been taken up by rice, add some onion and spoon of oil, stir. Take away all fire, spread oils, leave for another 10-15 minutes.

“Empowerment” of girls may have led to irresponsible behaviour, not obeying grandmothers) parents anymore, saying “tili ndi ufulu” - we are free.
Yesterday Eveles again said that people these days say “ndi nthawi yanga” - as answer to my question why people don’t change their behaviour now that they know about the risk of HIV and the ways to prevent.

Some planted tomatoes at non-dimba fields, just here in village, like all other crops, when they are ripe, they have low value because everybody has own, there is plenty of it.

Again many women came to knit, Tumanene had her hair braided, knitting: Dorica, Kondwani (sister of chief Mudzi B), Tumanene, Esnart, Chisoni, 2 granddaughters of Eveles, Livia, Innocent, Trinity (g’daughter Jasmine), Vanessa. Telling each other that “when you give birth I will knit you this or that”, It seems that the bigger the group, the less talking. Gertrude says = less free to talk.

Woman from K. village came to learn from Gertrude how to send text message. She is married to one of the sons of GVH in SA. Sofia and she discussed while here that a bar has now been opened near [large commercial estate] and the ex-wife of the owner of our house is working there. The woman said to Sofia: you used to come here sometimes for a month after quarrelling with your husband and then you went back, now you went there for only 4 months before you were sent here. Is he still coming here to visit you or not? Sonia said no, he came one day but I didn’t sleep with him, I don’t want another child from him, I’m just waiting for him to build a house for me. I will have enough maize after harvest and will try hard to find money to buy more, will ask my brother in SA to send me money. Wants to build house nearby ours, where c chief Mudzi A also wants to build (where Fatima cut cassava leaves from tree)

Woman said that her younger sons go to get condoms at [clinic] to make balls. “The wraps you see lying around come from them”. Says she went there herself for blood testing and will also take her husband when he comes back from SA. Sofia also wants to go and take her children too (3 eldest, not youngest). They also discussed that it was the owner of this house who told his mother that he doesn’t want to see the Rosemary family in Mudzi B anymore when he comes back after he heard about the theft. After which his mother chased them.

Livia came to get her clothes, is going to tell mother about boyfriend. Yesterday he also gave her a chitenje and 1000mk to buy a cellphone from a boy in village behind Mudzi B, the remaining 1000mk for the phone he will give tomorrow. Livia already went to give the deposit of 1000mk to that boy. Says she didn’t sleep with him yet, when Gertrude asked whether she used condom. Gertrude thinks he must be stealing, to be able to afford all this, many boys and girls working in shops in Lilongwe does.

Livia sold 100mk of green tomatoes from her field today to an unfamiliar passer by. He will just keep them in his house until they are ripe.

Jasmine took us to get cly for making pot tomorrow, somewhere through Innocent’s maize field where Gertrude noticed that the maize is now already drying, and that Innocent did not finish weeding, but the plants do have cobs. When we reached black earth with grasses she started digging, not deep. Said that they leave a small miniature pot (doth of clay, thumbed to get pot-shape) to keep the real pots from breaking. Also told us how in the past they used to make a skirt from their chitenje by tying it
around their waist with a grass. The same chitenje would in the night used as a blanket for wife and husband, when home she spread the dothi on an empty bag to dry, get harder. Then tomorrow she will sprinkle some water on it and leave it in the sun for some more time. Then in afternoon we can make pots. Gertrude asked whether it is true that in past people used to cook nsima in a clay pot which Jasmine confirmed, until the azungu came and told the people that it is better to use metal pots.

Monday February 16, 2009

When Gertrude went to borehole together with Phingi and Livia. Livia asked Phingi why she always sends Talina to go with her, what is wrong? Nothing, nothing, answered Phingi. Still Phingi wants that in stead of going to school Talina goes with Livia to Balaka today, wait for Livia’s tailoring course to end and then go to buy maize together. Livia apparently did not tell mother about boyfriend yet. What is she afraid of, I asked Gertrude. May be that her mother will not be happy, fearing that Livia will just get pregnant again without husband if she allows her to meet with this boyfriend, why doesn’t boyfriend come to see Livia’s parents? If he is really serious….. Phingi was fine with the possible marriage with a man brought forward by one of her friends.

All women from Mudzi A, Mudzi B and other villages have been told to go to J. village to collect sand for a car to take it to [nearest tradingcenter] hospital for maintainance. All seemed to be going, also chief Mudzi A, but Livia still going to Balaka.

Feb 16, Monday - again blue sky, the potatoes that we planted yesterday morning already look death...

Livia was lucky, all women from Mudzi B, Mudzi A and other villages were called to come to J. vlg to help collect sand for uitbouw of [nearest tradingcenter] hospital. Phingi also went, which meant that Talina had to stay at home to babysit. So Livia went to Balaka alone. But was back early, was coming our way when we just headed for Jasmine’s to start making clay pots, at about 3PM. Said she skipped tailoring class (has already followed the whole course, and received a sowing machine before, but it was taken by her uncle), just bought maize - and will tell the rest tomorrow. Had bought some schuimende chemicals in boterhamzak, for 20MK at market, to treat her hair to become big. But bites into scalp. Is homemade by vendors, as cheap alternative to real chemicals/shampoo at 250MK above. Gertrude treated her hair when we were waiting for the pots to dry a bit, and later braided it. She is making herself attractive. Meanwhile, Hana made her first steps without help, and without anyone noticing or caring except for older sister Joy who was very excited: “you walk alone!” Molly joined us (also wanted her hair braided) and Dorica and Evelin - all at Jasmine's today as we were learning to make clay pots there: Grind/mix the dothi by beating on it with stick on a big flat stone. Then kneden. Then clear some soil from sand with hoe by digging a bit. Put clay hump done and simply start making put in midden en langzaamaan verfijnen. Quite difficult obviously, although Jasmine was clearly very practiced in it. This is good time to start making the, she said, so as to have a series when cotton season comes and people can buy. At app 50-100MK, Gertrude estimates. Others were laughing that we are now learning to make clay pots (for making nsima or ndiwo or mandasi) while they - who are from the village - don't know. But don't seem interested either. When Gertrude said they can learn too, they just laughed. The pot are partly finished now, have their shape but not afgewerkt. Will do tomorrow, then leave to dry until Thursday, then burn them and then they are ready for use.

Innocent was preparing matemba, with tomatoes and water.
Afterwards we all went to our home where all started knitting. Molly and Livia had hair braided until dawn. Molly said that she likes to cook, but not to go to borehole or chigayo. Too far, can't manage, does it only because of umphawi. Would like to cook the whole day for someone if that person would then go to borehole and chigayo for her. Livia said that she likes going to chigayo, because it gives an opportunity to chat with friends. Molly has cellphone now, she was flashed twice, she said it was her husband at the Grocery who just wants to chat, she didn't call back.

Chief Mudzi A also went to J. vlg, chief Mudzi B didn't feel well though, she said, and therefore didn't go. By 9 AM the women came back. In case more sand will be needed, they will be called again. A car took it from J. vlg to [nearest tradingcenter].

Mother of Dorica went to [nearest tradingcenter] with a bucket of tomatoes from her own field, would join others afterwards. She too came back early, we met her on our way to M. school: Sindinachedwe - she didn't take long to sell all. This was her second time this year to go sell her own tomatoes.

Before going to school for drawing exchange project, we went to Kima who I yesterday found brewing kachasu (I was quite able to converse without Gertrude!). She had finished already though. Explained that it takes the madea, sugar and water about 3-4 days to yeast, depending on weather/temperature [see drawing Book III, page 44]. Stirring 3 times a day. Then put on fire as I saw yesterday. Bring to boil and wait for app 30 minutes for first drops of kachasu (local Malawi gin, both Kima and Magda called it, saying that the factory Malawi gin is based on kachasu). She didn't have much madea, only a small bowl at 5 MK. Usually makes more. Added 2 kgs of sugar (260MK) and 5 ltr water. Her yield was 1,5 liters of kachasu. Per 1 ltr bottle charges 200MK, or if somebody buys in small quantities a 40MK the bottle goes for 300MK. But she prefers selling it at once so that she has enough money to buy new sugar. While if she gets 40MK it is easily spent on some passerby selling matemba... Ver small profit margin, I find - why not charge more? Ah, people would not accept. Can you add water to the kachasu once people are very drunk? No, they will notice and not come again, they have ways to test. Can also notice from hangover next day: if one cannot work on the field the next day, water was added. I said I would like to buy the bottle for my husband as present - thinking that she'd be happy with the money. But she rather wants to sell me another time, then she will make good one: “advertisement,” she said. Suset was outside her house on her knees, throwing up/spitting saliva: has not been feeling well for a month now, malungo, they say. Kima takes care of kids.

On our way to Kima saw Doris playing around, Gertrude asked her why she stopped school: Palibe chifukwa [there is no reason]. We did see Dorica at M. school.

From Mudzi B to M. [nearest primary school] app 1 km. Went there to give standard 5 pupils the drawings that Tjeerd's class had made, and have them draw Malawi life. Gertrude did good job guiding the whole exercise - has experience in teaching, also in teaching arts.

Esnart charges 30MK for charging phone, and gave Gertrude a plate of therere because she was taking some from her field when Gertrude went to pick up phone.

Sofia had earlier said to Gertrude: Anthu amanena kuti Evelin is on ARVs.

Yesterday Frauke & Saqib came to visit. I told them I would meet them on road from [small crossroads market], but end up chatting with Teleza, Suset, Kima and Magda at Kima’s kitchen. She was making kachasu and showed me, big clay pot on fire, with lit with hole through which later on a pipe will be
leads through a bucket with cold water.

Didn’t see and asked all (eg what remains in clay pot after all kachasu fulnes have been boiled out?).

On way to [tiny crossroads market] school met Sofia coming back to Mudzi B with basin with ufa on head. Later she told Gertrude that she had visited grandfather (husband of GVH) who is ill but refusing to go to the hospital, saying that he is tired of going to the hospital just waiting for the day to die. Relatives are visiting him and encouraging him to go to hospital, have the bike ready for him, but still he refuses. Gertrude asked her where g’father is from: M. village, he got his land (around our house) from wife (GVH).

Venesi came back with daughter from hospital now though.

Kima added to her beer brewing talk (in laptop) that people like to drink at her place because they can drink alone, without meeting friends for whom they have to buy drinks like at [small crossroads market]. Here is more hidden, concealed, off the beaten track.

**Tuesday February 17, 2009**

Feb 17, Tuesday - rain in night, but some of the potato plants seem to have died indeed from 2 days sun... Sun during day.

Thokozani doing ganyu in cotton field of husband of GVH around our house (Levison has not been seen or heard since I arrived back in vlg). The man himself had not slept in night and this morning was taken to hospital at [nearest tradingcenter]: on a chair on bike, accompanied by GVH, three (grand)sons, Jasmine, Sofia & kids. Quite, however, they stopped their journey and turned back, because he says he will have to be transported by car or otherwise brancard. Some days ago GVH came to greet with hoe in hand on way to fetch some traditional medicine to give to ill husband, because she too was tired of going to hospital.

Maize mill: 30MK to grind (ngaiwa), 30MK to make ufa.

Lovely, who came to ask for picture of her in cotton field and one of kids to send to husband in SA - and knitted while waiting for me to finish writing, [Lovely] told Gertrude that Fatima is indeed really divorced. The husband is just waiting to find money to give her to make it official. There is no set amount, can be anywhere from 100-2000MK. She [Lovely] also told Gertrude that Blessings received 44 blankets and 12 zitenje from husband in SA to sell. She sends boys around to [large commercial estate], [small crossroads market], Balaka to spread the word that here people can buy blankets.

Modesta was called away when knitting to receive a letter from boyfriend Davie via another boy. Kondwani commented that writing letters is what they (her generation) used to do to communicate with boyfriends and husbands, but these days people have cellphones, so they should be communicating through those, not letters which are something of the past. If she (Modesta and friends) gets pregnant, we can knit them shoes as we learn here, the women laughed. Vanessa complained that girls these days see no benefit in going to school, they only think of their boyfriends and how they can meet them. The women said that girls are ashamed to talk freely with (girl)friends, but are very talkative and open to their boyfriends. When Gertrude and I went to take pictures at Lovely’ cotton field, we passed by a group of boy and girl adolescents (Ellesi
Chisoni complained that she was tired of eating (fresh) maize now, have been eating since 6th of Feb. The cobs are now getting dry and thus difficult to eat. Lovely agreed, saying that she ate so many cobs already that today she didn't want any. She thinks they will be able to harvest by half March, as it already takes almost 2 hours to boil the maize cobs (compared to only a few minutes beginning of Feb).

Someone from C. village came back from SA and sent a message to all wives of men in SA that they can come and see pictures of their husbands. The women said they are not going to go all the way over there just to see some faces on pictures without even receiving any money. They have their cellphones, are in contact with husbands often enough.

husband of GVH is now indeed in hospital, where he was taken on a brancard, with help of many boys. Chiwenzi [boyfriend] of Venesi came by on his bike towards Venesi's house around 4PM.

Livia found no maize at Admarc in Balaka, so bought at vendors for 80MK/kg. In afternoon she [Livia] was dressed in a long jeans skirt and (half worn out) shoes with dikke zool, saying that she looked as if she works in an office.

There were about 1or 2 weeks between time that mango’s got finished and first thelere and later nkhwani could be eaten. Many came to get some nkhwani from Gertrude’s garden, in which the pumpkin plants had boomed because of rains. At this time the nandolo was distributed.

Innocent came to say we could come to finish our pots and said they will miss me when I will go, have gotten used to passing by and checking whether I am at house, greeting. At Jasmine's house (she had kept the pots under empty maize or fert bag and at khonde so hard rain in night hadn’t destroyed them), we gave the pots more shape and decorated them. Now they have to dry for some days, Kingsley came too, just to hang around, in fancy jeans and slippers in which he had just gone to [small crossroads market] to arrange car for grandfather (but the car had already been borrowed to someone else, so they should wait). He [Kingsley] found some maize at Jasmine’s and roasted it for all of us, meanwhile they discussed when they could be harvesting. April Jasmine kept saying, in March the cobs will dry, Gertrude said that they had not expected to be eating fresh maize so soon, already by 5th Feb people started eating, so harvest may be sooner too. Hm, was not taken in, planted 19-21 of Nov, so harvest in April. We will see. And discussed the use of fertilizer, Jasmine grew hybrid next to house with only manure, people don’t apply more manure because ‘ulesi’ but will do so coming yr, she promised. Applied fertilizer mixed to be enough for whole field, Innocent was planting mbatata; you’re late, yelled Gertrude to Innocent in her field. No, this is the time for it.

Jasmine says she will make a whole serie of pots and then put them near the street for sale. An average size will give her app 30mk, but if she would go to Balaka to sell 50mk, but that would cost her transport.

Kingsley said that people don’t apply fertilizer at the right time, when it is too big already.

A friend of Jasmine from another village came and told us, seeing us learning to make pots, about a current project in her village from concern where they learn to make charcoalburners and toilet stones. Her name is Chifundo and she likes doing BS, she said. Wanted Gertrude to teach her to make bread,
which Gertrude did with Jasmine’s ingredients. Complaining that she lacks capital then I said a small BS should bit by bit lead to bigger ones. Ah, but the family that she has to take care of is too big, is taking care of 7 orphans, grandchildren whose mother died. And her husband died in 1996, then why don’t you find another husband? Can’t he may mistreat all the children at her house, or he may be a witch and eat them all when she is off to the lake to buy fish for her BS. He may find food and eat it all by himself in stead of sharing (point for Daniel’s PhD: women taking care of many children less attractive to men/new husbands). I asked Jasmine whether she expects that people will be buying bread at this time of year, she anwered that she doesn’t know which BS to do now to find some money, just trying bread now (may be knowing that I will at least buy). “If we just stay (without BS) how can we get soap? 

1429 Sofia asked Innocent yesterday to beg Innocent’s brother/Sofia’s husband for money, telling him that she has none, that she already went to beg 500mk from her grandmother. He told Innocent that Sofia should just got grandmother again because he has nothing.

1430 Jasmine says that as child her name was Elena, then at initiation she was given the name Jasmine, says that Janneke is the English spelling of my name/foreigners spelling while Yanaka is Chichewa spelling.

1431 Few days ago at Jasmine’s: husband had radio on, also HBof Amila had radio on. He just now came to beg 10mk for fodya again, Gertrude told him we don’t have, he should first come with some nkhuni.

1432 I see now in my interview notes with GVH that she said she owns 2 acres of land which she inherited from parents and husband has 1,5 acres. They used to cultivate both fields together, but now separately because he uses the money from his field for other wives, so she decided it is better to each farm their own field.

1433 Phingi said to Gertrude today: thanks for giving shoes and skirt to Livia, also her father was very happy, don’t stop this behaviour! Gertrude did not know what to answer, will ask Livia about itlater.

1434 Old notes: Sept 10 2008, Mr Ntawanga and chief Mudzi A’s wife both came to make clear that they are scared because GVH is complaining that we have not yet interviewed her, were very relieved when I finally said that I will interview her. Now GVH had already been saying that Hamra, whom we did interview is not even from Mudzi A.

1435 Have not seen Thandizo at all, not even at her own khonde, is very ill, says Gertrude, went to hospital, but back.

1436 Jasmine had sent Chifundo a message yesterday saying that she’d be making bread today. Chifundo came because she was interested to learn. Chifundo from her side had been helping Jasmine by giving her part of 10.000mk CUMO loan - 3000mk, Jasmine paid H 310 (?)MK/2 weeks, no profit for Chifundo. At time when Jasmine did not get own loan from CUMO, some weeks ago. “I’m lucky that my friend helps me now that I can’t get money from CUMO.

1437 The skin on top of Sofia’s baby has healed: the witch has stopped bewitching, she is still drying
Jasmine & Chifundo (1948, 2 yrs older than Jasmine) have known each other for long time, both families originally came from Zomba, looking for land (malo). Chifundo’s family first, Jasmine’s family later, Chifundo living at K. village land given to them by chief C. before chief Mudzi B was established. Says that K. village is like a town, while Mudzi B is village, with proper streets and houses. People there (Nyanja tribe) are educated, have habit of sending children to school. They work hard on their fields, thonje [cotton], fodya [tobacco], a lot of maize, they work so hard on their fields that many can afford iron sheets, which Gertrude and Jasmine presumed was because many migrated to SA, but according to Chifundo nobody from there works in SA. GVH of villages group B. is also educated, while here, Jasmine adds, people are uneducated, don’t know how to read and write, they just wait for a project, a hand-out, a registration for anything and then they all line up. Preferably registering themselves multiple times, after people have died, they are still registered, just to receive whatever can be received. And here people steal, Jasmine also says.

The two met through a cousin of Jasmine, who used to chat with Chifundo. After the cousin died, Chifundo continued to chat with Jasmine. They were very close, clinging the pointing fingers of left and right hand Chifundo showed how close. When I die, Chifundo said, Jasmine will wash and dress my dead body, when one is ill, the other will take her to hospital.

I sat on mat with Innocent and played with her son. Chifundo asked who was older, Innocent or I, since I don’t have children yet and Innocent 2. Then Jasmine asked when I want to get married (even though she must know that Feye visited, clearly putting marrying and having children on one line now, indeed in Chichewa “banja” refers to both). Gertrude answered for me: first wants to finish education. Jasmine said bit earlier in conversation that she is happy that she can read and write; people won’t be able to cheat her.

Although Tinenenji said in interview that she had 1 acre of land, later she has said several times that she has none, that she was working on the field of her husband. Innocent has also said that Tinenenji has no own field, so what will happen with the harvest now that husband has divorced her after finding her own mat with ex-husband of Fatima? Gertrude thinks he will not share his harvest with her.

Kingsley already came to check at Jasmine’s whether breads were ready, so there is at least some clientele. Gertrude has seen him in the fancy jeans ever since we got here. But the blouse and slippers are new. She thinks he may have bought them with the 1000mk I gave him as thanks for sleeping at our house to protect. He went to Balaka the very next day.

Empowerment: some women say they want their husbands to leave, but that the husbands simply refuse, saying they have no where to go. Amila, who decided to divorce + why? Examples of women who decided to divorce? Venesi, indeed husband first refused, but later agreed to leave. Women with “lazy men”, Hamra not to follow husband when he wanted to move to home village to take care of parents who decided to divorce (because man lazy)? Eveles, Balakasi (although later says he got married in Mangochi, then came back but still didn’t work field so she sent him away, he is now working as gate man in Balaka, Teleza, Saibi, Chikondi (violence, “she decided he agreed”), Magda (lazy quarrelling), Belita (many zibwenzi), Dora (several wives), Pamela
(according to own story). Zara left first husband after he mistreated her, moved back to mother, Tumanene same, Molly (beer), Nola (several wives), Auleria (not providing, not simply home).

Just to be sure that this is in notes: Nelia and Aunt Rashida about accepting proposals & income: Nelia quickly accepted proposal of a 4 yr older boy (she 17, he 21) when she was selling at Balaka market - changu = hurry, before he changes his mind and proposes to someone else. If this one would have old or ugly, would you also have accepted? No, and also also not if he was a beer drunker or loud talker because they cannot manage to take care of family. Then I asked why some women do stay with husbands that drink beer, are talkative: “If one is from a poor family, it is difficult to divorce a man who is lazy, drinks beer, beats you”. They also said: “If you are proposed as a woman you are considered luckily, some are never proposed. Most are proposed but some are afraid, to get married to someone who drinks beer, better do my own BS to find what I want, they have their own BS and don’t want to be”?! (p 17 in Note book 2). They still may have children, but from zibwenzi.

Jeneti seems pregnant!

Tinenenji passed by and stopped for knitting but was actually on her way to husband of Jasmine to buy paraffin, she called it ‘grocery’.

Lovely came for pictures of her 2 daughters and son in best dress, and herself without child in cotton field. Both to send to her husband in SA. Then Chisoni wanted a picture with a book (dictionary) in her hands and another with me. Lovely also with me, to show husband that there really was a mzungu [white person] in village.

When sitting on Chisoni’s khonde for picture, I could look inside and saw many pages of a magazine taped on walls, a small table, 2 chairs and a reet bench. Her husband had hung the pages (incl azungu women in lingerie). On wall also a picture of her with husband (young men with cap), a curtain in door hole kept me from looking in bedroom, but saw bucket with ziwiya, and a suitcase old with clothes on. Then Fissa, a group of children and Jeneti also wanted their picture taken. And Lovely one knitting with Gertrude next to her.

Breads of Jasmine: 2 kg flour at 160 MK = 320mk.

20mk sugar

20mk yeast

Bit of salt.
Selling bread rolls at 5mk and some bigger ones at 15mk. How many did she make and sell?

Chifundo wants to sell at M. [nearby school], sold for 5000 mk (said Innocent approvingly/impressed) and was left with 12 breads (60mk) which she took with her. Gertrude thinks that she probably bought the ingredients too.

February 18 2009, Wednesday

Feb 18, Wednesday - Rain in last hours of night, clouded morning.

Livia passed by on way to borehole, Gertrude asked her about skirt and shoes. Livia apologized for having told her parents that she received these from Gertrude, but is still afraid to tell mother about boyfriend. Afraid that although he is giving her clothes now, he will not really marry her. She waits until he says he wants to meet her parents, then she will tell them...

Innocent came to knit in morning (decoration), didn't have any job to do for now. Later has to be cooking, fetching water again etc. I asked whether she got married through ceremony: no, because was already pregnant. But both fathers of kids paid 700MK to GVH (who is supposed to share with chief and parents, but eats it all by herself). The second one left a week after paying the money though, she said surprised/strange thing to do, but doesn't know why. Can't think of anyone who had a proper ceremony with ankhoswe in Mudzi B nor Mudzi A, only the one from K. village who came to learn to send sms. And her own sister in Zomba: ankhoswe say that bride and groom have to respect each other, first discuss problems themselves before coming to ankhoswe, not come at first argument. Put hand on Quran (Innocent said bible) to promise to stay married.

Jane (1988) passed by, Innocent commented that she didn't look like someone who is in a new marriage. If it would be her, if she marries and stays somewhere else she would do her best to look nice when coming to see mother, so that people can see changes. Later Jane came to chat, saying that she had run away from husband. Hadn't realized that marriage is different from relationship. Then you see each other sometimes, and then not for some days. But now, boy wants sex all the time! Can't manage... Wants to grow cotton next season and run off to South Africa, to boyfriend there who loves her more than this husband (worked together in field to buy him a passport etc). She met with him yesterday, just before he departed back to SA - so probably discussed about this. Will also continue her relationship with boyfriend from Form 3, who gave her 500MK per week to buy clothes and soap, all the clothes she is wearing these days were bought with his money. She decided to marry because grandmother refused to buy soap for her when she begged, saying that she had her own means of finding money. Jane then complained that she was tired of doing ganyu, “then use your body to get money!” GVH said. That's when Jane started going to Balaka, moving around with boyfriends, coming back late. Then GVH said Jane was not allowed to talk to friend Alisa anymore, and Jane decided to marry this one. Used to laugh at girl marrying young, but now understands that one marries out of problems, like herself, not able to find soap. A girl passed by, a year younger than Jane, married for 1yr now, Jane said she wondered how that one manages to keep up (especially having sex so often, whenever he wants, and he wants often...). [CAN SHE NOT REFUSE TO HAVE SEX??] Wants to divorce
now, will run away to aunt in Salima, and then next year to SA. She has lost weight (I didn't see, she felt so herself), he hasn't bought her any new clothes since they got married, he even refused to pay bike taxi for her to visit sick grandfather, she came walking from Balaka (he said: maybe you go back to your old boyfriend). They are buying there, have to buy everything, didn't get properly prepared for marriage... Said “Alisa sananame kuti banja ndi lovuta” - Alisa had also run away from husband because he wanted sex all the time, as she once said at borehole. She is happy that she is not pregnant, that she can indeed run away. Alisa (with whom she chatted before passing by us) has been told by mother (Malita) to cook her own food now, but she has no field, so decided to be marrying her current boyfriend. Had boyfriend whom she wanted to marry, but hasn't been coming since last months. Now has other boyfriend who buys her food

Kingsley came to tell that yesterday evening his grandfather has been sent to Balaka hospital.

Good that I can see 2 villages, and the differences among them, but in Mudzi B many men in SA, while in Mudzi A only one went recently. 1 with GVH, one adjacent, one at some more distance (Mudzi A 2), apparently K. village is very different too - should visit Chifundo once!

Gray said he didn’t belief that women can accept proposals/be proposed at first sight (“we first need get to know her a bit more, invite her for a drink oid), but Gertrude thinks it can happen to some women.

Rosemary renting field for 1000mk/season.

A quick counting shows that of all married women (total 46) 23 have husbands without own land, (of whom 2 don’t have own either, see blue flowered note book for list of names), 17 buy own land (separately or together) and 6 don’t own land, but husband does.

Went to Dora to buy a full big plate/small basin of half red tomatoes for 50mk. On way found old woman on Thandizo’s veranda eating phala, Gertrude saw Thandizo inside on mat. Tinenenji came out of house with bucket of water, Auleria was eating nsima at khonde of Tinenenji’s house with adolescent girl (daughter Modesta, in std 6, repeating class because failed last yr in relationship with brother of Lovely = son of Fissa). Dora said people are buying her tomatoes these days, but only small amounts = 10mk and add to thelere (very low buying power in village, eg small profit on kachasu, low prices for cooking pots - that cost lot of work).

Gertrude asked Livia about Phingi’s suggestion that she should look for work at [large commercial estate].  Livia says that she already found something, will be cleaning offices after March 2, when she expects to receive a sawing machine from her tailoring course.  Expects to get about 5000mk for her cotton, wasn’t able to clear all the field because “too busy on maize field” to plant more cotton.

Amila passed by to greet and agreed with Gertrude to go fetch nkhwani at her field. This afternoon, Gertrude suggested, better tomorrow morning because in afternoon there may be women knitting here who may get jealous (using English word ‘jealousy’) if I come to take you to fetch firewood.
In afternoon we went to give pictures at grocery, Zione was there, now selling matemba in stead of mandasi for her sister at [small crossroads market]. Sister shares some of the profit with her (amandigaila). First looked for her at home, just nearby grocery crossroad. Another younger, girl was selling tomatoes, both sitting at some distance in shade of a khonde.

Then we moved on to find Paula and a girl that wasn’t selling at the time when I made pictures, but asked to make her picture. Also living nearby crossroad, on way back to Mudzi B through fields, found her, pregnant, had a girl roast chimanga for us. Her name is Getty, born 1991, married since 6 months (app - ?), with a volunteer teacher at M. [nearest primary school]. Staying in his house, because she had none and he did. Met on street when he was coming back from secondary school in Balaka together with a friend of him who is her in-law. She came from school at [small crossroads market] (her home village is M. village), std 7. at that very same day he proposed chibwenzi with her, she accepted because Christmas was coming and she wanted some money for these holidays (5 Dec). soon she found herself pregnant but she miscarried, now she got pregnant again, just before writing exAmlations (which is Oct), then they married and she stopped school, didn’t write exAmlations. Did BS: samoosaas and matemba, samoosas at 5mk (kakang’ono) filled with irish potato, salt and carry. But stopped now because of hunger season: ndinasiya chifukwa panopa kuli njala, anthu alibe ndalama. When she made samoosas and didn’t sell any for 2 days she stopped, will start again when her husband gets money, before getting married she also did BS: selling kanyenya when still at schoo l, during break. Both have their fields but she works on his field now, “so is mine”, she joked, she asked where we are from and whether we work or just stay in Mudzi B, he is orphan, was staying alone in house with younger brother.

She brought out a picture book to add the one I gave her. Was clearly his picture book, with mainly portrets of him in cool posses. And quite number of zibwenzi, also 2 pictures from an African bride and groom in full western outfits from a magazine. And from a magazine or folder a text saying something like “I used to have many girlfriends, but now I have chosen to focus on school, choosing for a future etc, with a picture of 3 girls signalling to a boy to come, also some cat out texts if he “I love my girlfriend”, “girls and boys are equal”, “I will choose my own path oid”.

Passed by [Bicycle maker] to check on my bike, not finished but he is at least working on it, and bought new parts for the old frame which he is painting blue. Hasn’t seen able to finish [bicycle] because ill, sores in mouth so problems eating, and malaria/fever, said he thinks that because of njala many people get ill these days, Gertrude asid it may also be the many mosquitoes, but he repeated: “Nah njala”. His wife, magret Tambala, also has her own field kwanu, at M. [nearest primary school], which she cultivates, was cutting mbatata branches for planting. husband said it’s late for planting already, Gertrude answered him that others are also still planting.

Went to finish our miphika at Jasmine’s, make surface smoother with wet stone. Now they will have to dry for almost a week, but not in direct sunlight but inside. Innocent excused herself for not having a bed, at least she has a mosquitonet hanging. Received 3 from hospital (when pregnant, when giving birth, when leaving hospital (another time?). Jasmine also excused herself for keeping goats in the house and not having swept, said we reminded her of the time when she was still at Domasi, when nurses would pass by the houses at times of cholera checking and advising people about hygiene.
Sofia was still drying thelere and leaves, the same ones but also extra. Was washing her clothes in a basin, but [Sofia] went to beg some salt from grandmother in evening: “ndinakapempha mchere, chifukwa ndilibe ndalama” [I am going to beg salt, because I don’t have money].

Kondwani was also there, at Sofia’s khonde (after having been knitting at our house until we left). They discussed about a new upcoming project to make charcoal burners, the tree project wants each chief to select a man and a woman as delegation to a seminar in Balaka.

Amila told Gertrude at borehole that some people, incl her husband, are after the relative of Sweetness who earlier stole her coupon and is now stealing maize at various fields.

But earlier after lunch, Kondwani, Vanessa and Livia came to knit, discussing that husband of mother of Vanessa has come back from Liwonde where he worked, about going to see husband of GVH at Balaka hospital, the upcoming tree seminar, chasing their kids to play somewhere else, this year’s harvest in March not April because already it takes very long to boil maize.

No rain since early morning, but thunder clouds in evening.

Gertrude’s mother is out of hospital now, discharged because of high cholera infection rate, but since today also feeling better. Asked Gertrude to send some money because she borrowed for transport to and from hospital for herself and carrying daughter. We asked ICRISAT to transfer us a salary advance to bank account of Gertrude’s cousin in Lilongwe who regularly goes to Dedza, 3000mk.

I asked Gertrude about what she has heard about what happens just after a girl accepts a boy’s chibwenzzi proposal. She says they may make an appointment to meet in the next days to chat. Eg her friend Desi told boy to come see her at her khonde the next day, and there they asked each other how things were going: “zikuyenda?” And the girl may soon ask whether the boy is going to marry her or not, sometime they go to the market to buy ndiwo, which sometimes the girl then prepares for him. But Desi cooked at her khonde, put it in container and brought it to one of her 3 boyfriends, one of them impregnated her, but later started to menstruate again, Gertrude doesn’t know what happened. Little later she was pregnant again but she didn’t have money for an abortion at Banja la mtso golo (2400-2800mk) so told boyfriend that even though he was not working she was going to move with him.

Jasmine plans to be making many pots in March and then sell for exchange them for maize in April. At cotton selling season she will be making zigumu again, when maize is affordable again.

February 19, 2009 Thursday

Rains came in early night, not hard or long, as soon as they start, a short sudden smell of plants, especially when they started in early morning hours after 2 dry days, wow.
Gertrude asked Sofia about Levison: he is working (building) in Balaka, comes home every night but very late, about 9-10pm, leaving again at about 4am.

At 4am Kingsley came to tell that his grandfather has passed away. Gertrude just said sorry, in the next house (Jasmine’s) women started crying loudly and a bit later passed by, also the small children were now hysterically crying, probably scared by their mothers. Kingsley came at 6am to borrow Gertrude’s bike to go to the hospital in Balaka and ask whether the funeral will be today or not, so that they can empty a room.

Couldn’t sleep, which happens each time when I am taking malarone, but last night also because stomach was upset, I think because I ate too much maize: breakfast pocorn, lunch nsima with nkhwani and nandolo, chimanga chootcha at 5pm, more popcorn at 7pm.

husband of GVH has said that he wants to be buried here in stead of at his home village M. village. But we’ll see, Gertrude says, sometimes people quarrel about where someone should be buried, near which relatives. The fact that he had several wives also complicates things, although his belongings are usually divided amongst one’s children. But the harvest from his cotton field will probably be taken by GVH because it was originally her field, and she sometimes helped him on it.

Sofia came to beg 50mk for chigayo, for maize from GVH’s house, and sent 2 boys to borrow a bicycle to quickly go to get the maize grinded.

Jasmine passed by on way to GVHs house, saying “matenda awo ndi ovuta” [his disease is difficult/problematic], that he has been ill for 3 or 4 years already and that one of his girlfriends died already before he got ill and said before she died that many would be following her, insinuating AIDS. Now went to fetch some water and put it at GVH’s bafa so that she can bath when she comes home, men will be washing the dead body. GVH had in our interview been explicit about her assumption that husband may be suffering from AIDS, but later said that somebody is bewitching him because he isn’t getting better.

I had expected transition from hunger to plenty would be sudden, but that was very naïve.

Jasmine learned to make pots from a woman she used to buy from to exchange for maize.

Chifundo lives in one of the few iron sheeted houses of K. village, says Esnart, referring to her as “the one selling zigumu”. To me Chifundo immediately started saying how poor she is, struggling to take care of 7 orphans, while it was clear from her appearance that she is relatively well off, also fact that she trades in fish shows this.

Do men and women use their harvests differently may be? Or are they at least expected to use them differently? Like Hamra and husband: he sold his (used money by himself) and then ate from hers.

[Bicycle maker] sent letter begging for 500mk for rice because of sores in his mouth.
Relative of husband of Jasmine from J. vlg came to chat after she came for funeral of husband of GVH and see Jasmine but found her at M. vlg, where funeral will take place tomorrow. Said maize is usually dry in March, but people always harvest in April. Those with small fields are done within 2-3 days, but those with bigger fields take about a week and often hire ganyu. So around that time there will be ganyu, but only for few days. She [relative husband Jasmine] was married for 16 years, left school in St4 to marry because pregnant, got 5 children and stayed with husband in Dedza, where he works for water supply. Last year he sent her to her home vlg J. vlg to start build a house and work the field, he would join them later. He never came, however, she heard he has now married another, but he never sent her a message that they are now officially divorced. But she does consider her marriage to have ended. Had not harvested last season, so now eating with mother (and her 5 kids...). But also has a chibwenzi, Gertrude found out when she asked about the money for a chipewa that the woman had ordered earlier. The woman then said that the people at [large commercial estate] had not received their money yet, so she couldn't pay. Ah, so you have a chibwenzi there?? She confirmed, adding that she did not want a farmer ("Ine khasu, iyenso khasu, ayi"), but somebody with a paid job for whom she could cook lunch at 12: “Mulimi ayi bola wapantchito.” She bragged about the many proposals she receives from men, who don’t realize that she has 5 children already because she still looks thin (ndine woonda, osati wonenepa). her mother had even asked her whether she used traditional medicine to attract men. you will see, she said to Gertrude, if we go to Balaka together, I will get many proposals and you will get none. Gertrude asked her whether she is not afraid of HIV (matenda), she just said: Kaya, matenda awa a kachirombo ndi woopsya. But difficult to find money for soap with 5 children, her mother cannot manage to give this, therefore in relationship with man at [large commercial estate]. She also trades sugar cane at the moment. She wanted a piece of the golden thread with which I was knitting because she could make it look like a necklace, to show off - “somebody from Lilongwe gave this to me!” Won’t your chibwenzi get angry, wondering who gave this to you, I asked. “Ah, he cannot complain about what I have, it’s not like marriage.” Was joking (ndikuseka), saying that she had come to town, meaning Mudzi B. Joking because here there is no (tarmac) road, no cars. While at J. village! Big grocery shops, cars, bicycles, fresh fish for sale. And any development projects, I asked. No, she first said. Then I inquired: Everybody had enough money? Ah no! Then added that soon a project will start teaching women to make “wine”, she doesn’t know of what, will go and check it out, but will not participate because she wasn’t told about it. [Relative husband Jasmine] She was able to buy fertilizer this year because she had stolen something from her a husband (a water pipe or something) which she sold to find money. We served her some watermelon that Frauke and Saqib had left for us, of which she took the seeds for planting.

Earlier in the afternoon Esnart came by to give money to Gertrude for trousers that she is knitting for E’s son. 100MK because Venesi supplied thread herself from something knitted that she had taken apart. [Esnart] Said she doesn’t like moving around chatting with people because there is so much gossiping (Sindimapita kucheza mabodza). Prefers to stay at home just with kids. When she puts on nice clothes, people will be saying: Showing off that her husband is in SA! When she doesn’t put on nice clothes people will complain: Her husband is in SA, but you can’t even see it, she looks just like us, no difference! [Esnart] Commented on our maize left of kitchen, which looks better then those on the field right of kitchen. Asked whether we used manure there. I asked whether she used manure too? No, doesn’t have enough goats, only one goat. But leaving stems of maize after harvest to rot in field? most people like to burn their fields in Aug to clear the field, is least work... I said that in Gertrude’s home village people make their own manure. Hm, yes, she knows how to do that too, she laughed. Were taught some years ago, but people soon gave up, feeling they better spend their time making ridges. Even Mr Ntawanga didn’t make any anymore last year. Before, people had been laughing at him, saying that he will be planting late because so busy with making manure. His harvest was bigger though. The only one in vlg who still makes manure is Nola, but even she didn’t make much this season.
because she bought 2 bags of fertilizer (with the coupon that she was to share with g'daughter Grace). I drew a line to HIV prevention: People know how to make manure, and that it leads to bigger yields, but don’t do it - is it same like people knowing how to prevent HIV yet don’t do it? Yes, Venesi confirmed, we have meetings and discussions where everything is explained, we know. But people say: “yabwerera anthu, osati nyama” (it came for human beings, not animals) - fatalistic, almost like a welcome, making clear that they differ from animals, is our faith, it has come to us, nothing we can do about it. “Anthu sakuopa chifukwa cha mankhwala a ARV”, when taking ARV they will not die that same day or even year, they will stay alive long. “One can start suffering from AIDS this year, but then after taking medication may live up to 2015!” Did many people die from AIDS, I asked. Some died of AIDS, other malaria. And other causes? Also cholera, especially in Feb, but this year bola. Last year medication was distributed but some even died on the way to get there. In 2001 many died of cholera.

I asked about K. vlg, whether people there use manure, considering that there are so many iron sheeted housed there, maybe harvesting more because of manure? But Venesi said there are not so many iron sheeted houses there, maybe 4 or 5, indeed exactly there where we usually pass to Mudzi A 2. One of them is from Chifundo, to whom Venesi referred as “the one making zigumu” and another of her sister, the owners are all old. Venesi doesn’t know how they managed to buy iron sheets, were built in past. But none of them have gone to SA.

Told us that Jasmine went to bring food to GVH at M. village because GVH’s mother in law had earlier put poison in her food, so since then she never eats anything there. None of her husband’s other 3 wives had joined her in the hospital. When he had started getting ill, they had wanted to divorce him, not wanting to take care of him. But he did still go to some of them. He has no kids with any of the, only GVH. He was chief at M. vlg, but has been replaced when he moved here when he started getting ill. He was also a Muslim priest. Against his wish it has been decided that he will be buried at his home vlg M. village, people are gathering at his mother’s house. Funeral will be tomorrow, his body was brought there by ambulance from hospital in afternoon.

I asked Gertrude to what extent chibwenzi equals sleeping together, is this immediately implied when a man proposes chibwenzi. She said she has only seen her friend Desi from nearby, who usually would sleep with her boyfriends after about 2-3 weeks. When she was still in school (Form 2) she lived with younger sister of mother who paid for her school fees. A boyfriend would in night call her at her window. When ‘mother’ found out, she told D she would stop pay school fees. Dorine was encouraged by boyfriend to move out, he would marry her and take care of her. He left to SA, but never sent her money. That’s when she started moving around with other boys, sometimes having 3 at the time. One of her boyfriends impregnated someone else when also in relationship with D. The boyfriend that she married to now often asked her for food, which she would cook and bring him (food that Gertrude contributed too), he didn’t supply much for her. But these boyfriends wanted always to know exactly where D was going, so she had to inform them of all her plans. Call them when she wanted to go to market etc. Sometimes they would say she could go, at other times they would tell her to wait so that they can go together. Gertrude laughed at her: so busy asking permission for all her movements, while Gertrude herself could just go to the market whenever she pleased herself.

Gertrude often excuses ourselves for asking so many questions, when I have asked a number of questions. At the interviews some indeed said somewhat shocked/irritated: “Ah, you even want to know that!?” (BV Magda about number of blankets), Sofia also made a comment during the interview about Gertrude being too curious.

Feb 20, 2009 Friday

Feb 20, Friday - No rains in night
Gertrude met Saibi at borehole and asked whether she was still doing her masamba/tomato BS, since she hadn't seen her moving around. No, been ill for weeks, not getting better, thinks it is malaria.

9.30 AM, boyfriend of Venesi passing by to her house.

Kingsley came to borrow torch yesterday evening for relative who had come for deceased, Innocent was going to take him to M. village. When he brought it back this morning Gertrude asked [Kingsley] what they will use all the money for (were told by one of GVH's sons in SA to borrow 5000MK from Esnart who had just received it from husband, he will pay back her husband in SA and husband will then send her new money): bought white cloth to wrap body in (which only costs about 125MK per meter though...).

Funeral husband of GVH: We went after lunch with Evelin and Molly, joined up on way with Tumanene and Amila (both with umbrella and in best clothes, Tumanene with white scarf on head and sports shoes, Amila bare foot (Evelin and Grace with simple shoes). Walked behind each other, lot of chatting, through maize and cotton fields, with here and there mbatata ridges. Luckily it had not rained for 1,5 day, otherwise it would have been very muddy, but now very dry, only had to cross 2 waters (1 could be jumped, other one taking of shoes/slippers and walk through). Many men in Muslim dresses and with Muslim caps, a bit further, behind the house of the deceased's mother all the women in the shade of 2 trees, difficult to find some place in shade too. Just sitting, some silent greeting of women nearby. Only later - we left at 12.30, back at 5PM - did many start to chat quietly, even laugh. Later also some singing, only those who are Muslim knew the songs. At one point GVH came out of the house, spectacle, made a performance of grief, couldn't keep herself up, stumbled out of the door until people came to hold her up. Sat with the singing group for a bit, I think, couldn't see properly as we were sitting in a maize field, in between the pumpkins. Twice a man speeched, but not loud enough for us to hear too. At one point finally the body was carried out of the house, immediately a group, incl Sofia started crying hysterically, repeating: “agogo anga” and “amayi a agogo anga...” As soon as the body had passed, surrounded by men, and followed by women (hos other wives, mother, maybe other relatives) held up by two other women each, we left to head back for Mudzi B, about ½ an hour walk. Molly pointed at some black marks on maize cobs, explaining those are traditional medicines against people stealing the maize, scaring thieves that they may get lost in the maize field, never able to get out, or someone will die in their family. Then someone would have to find and pay for other medicines to get rid of spell, maybe as far as Zambia. Why don’t all people apply such medicine, I asked (asked once before, in Thukwi?, then I was told that not all people know about it). Gertrude thinks maybe because the medicine has to be paid for, maybe gotten from far.

Jasmine won’t be going to funeral today (but was gone yesterday to help) because she is not feeling well, pain in joints, coughing. Innocent and Lovely left for funeral at 10:30, Innocent said she has eaten maize morning so as not to go hungry, now eating maize cob. Esnart had planned to go but one of her children is ill, so will stay at home. Dora has gone already to help and so has Pamela, Venesi will not go, just said “Pamela is already going, so…. “we didn’t see her boyfriend, may be he just went to say that he would come later, which may then be the reason for her not to go to funeral, Gertrude speculates. Grace will go around 1pm, so we can go with her, she invited us in when we went to ask her, because no shade outside, freshly mudded floor. Her child was eating a breadroll, I asked where she had found that, at J. village where she had gone to buy groundnuts, she answered. Then explained to Gertrude how we can get there too, I didn’t see a bednet, but the room we sat in (on mphasa) is not her sleeping room, there she does have a net (and money apparently, but how? Doesn’t do BS). Venesi daughter seemed completely covered again, it had been malaria, her mother
House that Mr Ntawanga was building at Rashida’s has been washed away.

Last night Gertrude heard Doris talk with a boy. He asked her where she is going, to funeral (house) in M. village, she answered. Ah, laughed boy, you just cheated your mother that you are going to the funeral, but you just saw a chance to move around with boys! She laughed too.

Evelin to get us after lunch to go to the funeral of husband of GVH. Said M. village is very far, you can’t manage, Gertrude said we also walked to [clinic] and managed. Why, malaria? No blood testing, did you go? “No, ndimaopa,” said Evelin [I am afraid]. Gertrude told Evelin she will go with her, Ah, but then you will tell everybody that I am HIV positive! Said Evelin, Gertrude answered her she wouldn’t, and Evelin wouldn’t have to tell her the results at all. So people don’t want others to know, are ashamed to tell their status? I asked, Evelin confirmed, and gave the example of Jeneti who told people she got tested positive (Told relatives, Elube heard and told others) and since then wasn’t spoken to at borehole, only since recently is she looking a bit happy again, people were ignoring her. So people are afraid that nobody will socialize with them anymore after knowing that somebody is HIV positive. After people started to gossip about Jeneti, she became very unhappy, while it is said that one needs to be happy, live happy, when HIV positive “people are afraid to go test, they just like gossip about those who went for testing”, Evelin said. She asked earlier, when still talking about her going for a test, whether it is true what she has heard on the radio, that one can go for a test and be found positive, but when going again later can be found negative. This has actually happened to somebody from Monja’s office, so I said it almost never happens, but is possible.

When Molly joined us, passed her tomato field with both almost ripe tomatoes as well as a bed with recently planted sprouts. For selling now and to be selling in June (so she will need money to buy maize, she said). Already now she has many (green) one’s, (selling to people looking for tomatoes to be selling, Dora also sells to someone in [nearest tradingcenter] who then sells the tomatoes per smaller units). She had earlier stopped selling (end Nov) because tomatoes were then being sold at 600mk for a 5 ltr bucket, so couldn’t make profit.

Amila said that she wanted to go to the maize mill after the funeral, with maize which she prematurely took from her field (would rot or get bitter if all was taken off now, before properly drying). Others said that it would be too late to be going then (maizemill is at J. village), she would have to get back in dark so she tell her husband to go with her. Ah, he wouldn’t, too far, Molly said she prefers not to eat for one day then go to the maizemill after 4 pm, one doesn’t die from not eating 1 day.

The women (Evelin, Jasmine, Molly, Tumanene and Amila) were mainly happy with all the maize and cotton in the fields, saying that at least everybody is eating now, so also few thieves because everybody has their own. Looking forward to cotton season, having a lot of money, commented that GVH will have a lot of money from the cotton of her husband’s field. He does have children with his other wives, they said.

Gertrude’ daughter of Eveles came to bring us a pigeon, sent it back, saying we don’t know how to kill it.
husband of GVH has been buried on a graveyard especially for chiefs, with a little mosque on it. Only few graves, with big tombstones, women are not allowed on muslim graveyard, so only men went. In the speech at the funeral GVH was praised as example for other women because she took care of her ill husband while other women might run away from such a task.

Feb 21 2009, Saturday

On our way to Mudzi A2 to greet people there we saw Livia writing a letter at herkhonde. Did not go to tailoring today apparently, we passed by chief Mudzi A who is still ill, stomach and chest aches. From what it looked like he slept outside last night = mat, blanket and mosquitonet at khonde. He even had not been able to walk to M. village yesterday to attend the funeral, we asked him about the progression on the catching Ndaba issue, he said that the chiefs were supposed to meet, but then the husband of GVH fell ill to hospital, funeral etc. but it has been decided that the whole family will be chased, including Emra, because Ndaba will otherwise still have excuses to come here again. Chief Mudzi A said he also discussed with chief of F. village that the family should not be staying there either, they should just go back to where they came from. If the wife (Ainessi) wants to follow that is fine, but they should not stay nearby here. There has already been some stealing of maize, they will wait till after harvest, then chase them.

Then we continued to [Bicycle maker] to threaten that he should give back the 4500mk deposit we gave for the bike if he doesn’t finish it soon (he was working on another one now). Says he have it finished by tomorrow.

In Mudzi A 2 indeed just greeted all women that were at home, and chatted a bit on their verandas or on mat in shade. Many were drying maize and/or masamba, and many had a big pot boiling on the fire - filled with maize cobs and maungu, said Gertrude. Each family it’s own full big pot every day, and most will also be eating nsima with it, from their current yield. Jospehine anotonola together with husband, with next to them the big boiling pot and some maize cobs in the fire too. A dengu top full of thelere, and leaves drying. Nosalt had pumpkin flowers drying and mseula, her husband came back from prison on Jan 22, they lloked fine, also child. Only Belita looked a bit thinner, her mother complained they had all gotten skin, showing her underarms because of all the working on the field and the hunger. They had wondered when I would be coming with my help, but I didn’t come, also Victoria said the same, at the time for buying fertilizer they had wanted for me to come help them, but I didn’t. then at njala they had wanted for me to bring them maize, but I didn’t. I reminded her that from the beginning I have explained that I have only come to understand about their lives, not with any handouts. Still people hoped, she said, not understanding what other purpose there could be in all my visits and questions. The house he stayed in with her mother has been destroyed on 4th of January by heavy storms and rains which also destroyed the catholic church in Mudzi A and several big trees. Fortunately she had just finished the new house, so her mother could move in with her now. Victoria does make and apply manure, she says, and others in Mudzi A 2 do too. Just easy, they dig a pit, put in whatever organic material they can find (goat dung, leafs etc), add a bit of water and wait for 2 weeks, then apply. Then make more, other who don’t do it are simply lazy, said Victoria. She is already drying (some of) her tobacco leafs.
Grandmother of Ganizani was drying a full mphasa of maize, from the cobs of the stems that had fallen because of termites. A little boy was keeping goats away with a long stick, she was telling about Victoria who is worried about floods destroying her crops, termites and thieves. She had paid people to weed on half her field with meat. Why not protect field from thieves with traditional medicine, I asked, many people pretend to apply trad med, making it look as if they applied to scare of thieves. But thieves just close their eyes to not see it and then enter the field, with real medicine the thief may die on the field, or not be able to get out of the field unless he pays 5000mk, or a snake may come to kill him. It happens recently to a man at [nearest tradingcenter], who died after eating maize and pumpkin which he had stolen. The rest of his family had also eaten, but not died. People seem a bit scared to apply the trad medicine, this old woman said something like: then you have this dead body on your field and you are blamed for his death, or someone (a dangerous thief) stuck on your field who surely will not be able to come up with this 5000mk needed to release him. She herself had one day wanted to get trad med to protect her house after a thief had stolen some items from her, but then the traditional doctor died, so she failed. Sandala who had optimistically expected she and husband would not have to ganyu because of her mandasi BS, had indeed not done any ganyu. But only because her husband found a job at a motel near the mangochi turnoff at Liwonde, since December. In December she also stopped her mandasi BS because she used all the money to buy maize, also her husband's asalary was just used to buy maize. But she registered with concern to apply for a loan to start her mandasi BS again in March.

Belita said about her first husband whom she sent away that was easy. He had married someone else and just agreed when she told him she wanted to divorce. They were both still young, not like she is now. Women who say they want divorce but husband refuses to go, are just not serious, if he misbehaves then he should understand that he has to go, even if he is old and has nowhere to go. If he did nothing wrong, then he can right fully refuse to leave, but otherwise, no.

Grandmother of Ganizani and Victoria gave us some maize cobs, even though we protested that we have our own. Many of the women said that I been missing for a long time, the last time I had visited them it was mango season, now people are eating fresh maize. All keep saying that they will be harvesting in April, Victoria said that those who planted hybrid will harvest in March already, others in April.

On our way to [Bicycle maker] we saw Doris chatting with a boy on a bike, they had passed each other then stopped to talk, their backs facing each other. In the shade of the only tree.

A man sat that outside Victoria’s house, married again? Father of children?

A girl came to say that Kima is about to brew kachasu, so we went to see. With mud she make sure that no fumes could exit between the lit and the pot, but only through the pipe. The pipe got very hot, thus also the water in the bucket through which the pipe leads warmed up. So had to stir every now and then to make cool water from bottom of bucket move up. Soon drops came out of the pipe, within the hour the first 1 litre bottle was full, this is the strongest liquor.
The 3 bottles will be mixed to get an even percentage of alcohol. This time she added more madeya together with 2 kg of sugar, mixed on Thursday already. Last Sunday was the first time for her to be brewing again after hunger season, when it is difficult to find madeya, because people use it to make ufa (tastes bitter, so some add cassava flour or maize). During times of abundance many people just leave their madea [maize skins] at the maizemill, only taking home their ufa. After grinding at the maizemill the maize changed into ufa (woyera or gramill), and madea- mgaiwa is a mix of the 2.

Difference between ufa woyera and gramill is whether the grounded maize is put to soften in water before further grinding or not. If people would just always take their madea all throughout the year from the maizemill and keep it till hunger season they could at least have something to eat.

In last months madea was sold at 150mk per 5ltr bucket, now it lowered to 80mk because people are eating their own maize (also Kima and Suset were drying maize cernels in the sun). Kima even received a full bucket now from someone for free, and told a friend who was visiting and who also brews beer that she can have some of it too. Kima also discussed for some time the different sugar prices (130/kg at [small crossroads market], but 120 or 125 at Balaka). She suggested that her friend and her should both contribute to buy a bale large quantity (25 or 35 kgs) at a lower price per kg and share it. Teleza joked that Kima should not forget that she also drinks tea to which she adds sugar. Ah yes, I like my tea, confirmed Kima, I am just waiting to die soon.I can permit myself to enjoy something, I have sugar at hand for the beer, so I can easily just use some of it for my tea. Now that hunger season is over she will be brewing kachasu again 3 times per month, each time app 3 bottles at 200/300mk.

An older woman passed by with a small bucket of tomatoes which she bought at M. village. Prices have now dropped from 1500mk for a dengu to 500mk. She was selling 4 tomatoes at 10mk, adding 2 tomatoes so actually 6 for 10mk.

Kima gave us and her visiting friend (relatively well-to-do, it seemed, a bit fat) a cooked maize cob. Suset is getting better, bola.

In evening the girl came to bring me a bottle of the mixed kachasu, paid her 300mk instead of the usual 200mk that Kima charges for a full bottle, if she would have sold it per coca-cola bottle (33 cl at 100mk), she would have made 300mk, I didn’t want her to loose profit because of me.

Feb 21, Saturday - no rains whole of yesterday nor in night

Hypothesis: Gossip about third person to bond with gesprekspartner.

Some days ago Teleza and Kima discussed at borehole that the issue with people of Mudzi B disapproving of their chief’s behavior (at tree planting activity) could not happen in Mudzi A: they always discuss immediately with their chief when they feel he should be behaving differently, we would have dealt with it straight away, and otherwise they’d go to sub-TA [small crossroads market]. Not wait for days, not show up for work, delay in going to GVH, and leave it only to GVH to be solved.

When some days ago Lovely, Modesta and Sofia came to knit they were telling how children will be looking through all the maize fields after harvest, looking for left behind cobs and sell these cheaply.
Some will also be stealing from their parents' harvest to sell and find some money.

When husband of Esnart offered to lend people 1000MK for 50 kg maize (or 500 for 25 kg) most said that they couldn't do that. Same like at J. village vlg, where people could get 1 bag of maize, paying back 3 after harvest. Still, Gertrude noticed some people going there: Phingi, Amla, Jasmine, chief Mudzi B. She can't know what they went to do there, but presumably get the loan, meanwhile ashamed about taking such a bad deal.

Sunday, Feb 22: No rains yesterday or in night.

Went to Amila who had earlier promised us to take us to her field to fetch firewood. She just came back from madzi, with relatively small tin bucket (yesterday Victoria had 5 big ones standing below her iron sheet roof to catch rain water). She had been kuzira earlier today. We found her husband and kids on their khonde. When hearing that we came for nkuni husband said he has some somewhere, we should buy from him so that he can buy batteries for his radio. Then went to A’s maize field, walked through it to find bush. There she was happy to find a bird's nest with 3 baby birds, ndiwo! When Gertrude took it to look one escaped, A tried to find it amidst all the bush, but failed. Then broke the legs of the others, wrapped them in a big leaf, tied is with grass and gave it to young daughter Sakina to hold. Later she will chop of the head, tear out the feathers and intestines and boil them in water with some salt, then eat with bones and all. Chopped and pushed our way through the grasses - is also her field, but she [Amila] hadn't managed to clear it because her husband refused to work on the field often. Also now, they are making ridges for potatoes, he did only 5, she does all the others. That is why she decided to divorce now. He doesn't help her on the field, she is the one buying salt and soap, if there is no ufa she is the one who has to find some. They even eat separately because he does not want to eat together with the children, even though they are his (except the first one). And because they don't have enough plates, they have to wait for him to finish and then use the same plates for her and kids. All he wants are his batteries, batteries - she kept saying at different moments. He borrowed money (almost 1200MK) to buy fodya and batteries, and she was the one paying back that money with her MASAF income (used 600MK of it for ufa, and some for soap, salt, chigayo etc). She went to his uncle to explain the issue, he accepted too come and help her and he told her husband that he should leave the family. The husband came back to beg some ufa and didn't go back, but agreed to leave after harvest, sharing both maize and cotton. To which she agreed, even though she did most work on the field, because afraid that she will otherwise be bewitched by him. We passed 2 places where a tree had been cut down and chopped into a beautiful bundle of firewood. husband did this, to be selling to find money for batteries. Is his firewood, because he did the work (even though field is hers - husband also has a field at his home village, but the maize doesn't grow well there, low soil fertility, so they decided to cultivate only her fields here). husband told her to go to [nearest tradingcenter] and sell the firewood so that he can find money for fodya and batteries. She cannot take it to use it to cook for him, afraid that he will “touch her neck” (kill her). But she did give us some of it, hoping he won't see. Take some for yourself too! said Gertrude. No no, I have. After divorcing this man she [Amila] will not marry another, she said. Bcoz she has seen how this one treats the one child that she had before marrying him, beating him etc. Now she has many children that may be mistreated by a new man. Then take a chibwenzi, who won't live with you so won't mistreat your children, but can help you with money for soap etc, I suggested. Ah no, there are these diseases these days... But also condoms, I said. People don't really use those, she said, she had never since the day she was born. Why? Chibwana: childish... She failed to explain further. [So, zibwenzi are connected with AIDS...]

[So, zibwenzi are connected with AIDS...]
Amila has indeed borrowed money from Esnart (1000MK for 50kg maize: many did from her part of Mudzi B, she said, incl Tumanene, Emra - whose relationship with Ntaba has not ended, but he doesn't support her enough apparently, she even went to Amila to beg ufa), which she used to buy soap, salt, paraffin (500), ufa (800) and 80 for sugar cane to sell (making 150MK). Went again, in total made 400MK = 320M profit which she now used for maize, now stopped the BS: no mpamba. It's very far, at Luwawadzi, had 100 first time, but couldn't manage to carry, so bought 80MK.

They have 0.5 acre cotton field. She [Amila] made ridges alone, but now at least he is helping her to weed, seeing that money is coming from it soon.

We now agreed that we will buy the nkhuini that her husband chopped, and she will give some of the money from it to him to buy his treasured batteries but keep the rest herself. Gave her 500MK while the nkhuini has the value of 80-100MK, excluding what we got from her field today. She said she was going straight to buy some salt now at Jasmine's husband. We asked not to tell people I gave her so much for the nkhuini. Ah no, she wouldn't be able to tell, knows how people talk.

Visited Jasmine who is ill - malungo, indeed I see the signs. Also son of Innocent and daughter of Sofia (very skinny, especially compared to son of Innocent, looks almost cruel). Especially Sofia's daughter was really suffering [from malaria]. Was taken care of, but almost absently. Putting her to lie on mat, take her on lap, but lift her off it later even though she was sleeping. No worries at all about sick children. Gertrude asked why Jasmine's daughter stays with husband in Zomba, and not husband here. Doesn't really know, “she probably likes growing rice,” Jasmine kept saying. Does come sometimes to plant here, but then not to weed, came once to burn bricks to build a house here, but never did. Another daughter stays with husband in Blantyre, who never wants to join her coming to Mudzi B. She is afraid to come alone because he is a good husband, provides for her, hence afraid that he may find another wife while she is gone to work her field at Mudzi B. Now only come sometimes to chat for a day.

Gertrude asked whether Innocent will be cooking her own food after harvest. Jasmine says yes, and she'll be staying in the house where Sofia is staying now (who may move to GVH’s compound now that husband died, so she will have someone to chat to, Gertrude speculated). But have you forgotten that you like staying with Innocent and son in one house, Gertrude asked (when we arrived in Mudzi B Innocent stayed in house where Sofia stays now, but Jasmine moved from big house to that one to keep eye on her). Indeed, she may be receiving men at night if she stays alone there, so should stay with Jasmine, but cook own food. Ah, but it will be difficult to find my own ndiwo, Innocent complained, can find masamba, but what if I want to eat matemba (app 30MK for 1 meal). Gertrude suggested she should buy thread after selling cotton, and then sell what she knit at [small crossroads market] and [nearest trading center]. Innocent laughed. Father has given quarter of his cotton field to her recently (so he cleared, made ridges, planted, but she weeded). She also planted her own cotton (which she guesses will bring her 5000-6000MK). Jasmine told a story of a relative of Ada, who married a new husband, when she bought for them all to eat, the man would put in pieces of bike tyre for the kids to eat. Morale of story was that Innocent should leave her son with Jasmine when she would marry another man, because he will mistreat the child of another man. When I suggested the selling of manure, all laughed hard, including daughter of [Bicycle maker] who came to bring thread to Gertrude to knit her a jersey to fit her secondary school uniform (green, 400MK for the work, 4 balls of thread a 80MK, she said that after that her friends will surely come to Gertrude to have one too). People wouldn't buy, they would just laugh at you. But confirmed that maize grows better with manure and that most are too lazy to make it themselves. Still the idea was merely funny to them. In Mudzi A most do make manure, they have had all the chitukuko: manure project, trees, soy, mushrooms, goats. But now this also started in Mudzi B at least, with the trees. People in Mudzi B just don't know the benefit of manure. Jasmine didn't make this year, but will do again next, she promised, learned when participating in Mudzi A projects (before being kicked out because of me...).

Gertrude asked how she compared January to February. Jasmine and Innocent said that usually hunger is worst in Feb, but now, because of unexpected early maturing of maize they already started
eating green maize on 5th compared to 25 last year. So this year hunger was worst in January.

Jasmine says she has 2 acres, but didn't apply fert to all of it - but referred only to the field next to the graveyard while she also has others: the one behind her house with cotton, and another at some distance with maize. Says each year exchanges maize and cotton on the fields.

Livia joined us shortly after we went home. Gertrude immediately asked her why we didn't hear anything about her lover in Balaka anymore: Chatha? (Has the relationship - chibwenzi- ended? Livia laughed and denied that it had finished, saying that she hadn't gone to Balaka for tailoring because she is tired of going there. Will go again on Wednesday. Will also go tomorrow, but to hospital with mother, so won't be able to see boyfriend. I asked her [Livia] whether it is not possible for e.g. Jane to just refuse to sleep with her husband sometimes when she feels it is too much ipv running away for good. Hm, difficult with most men, some men just want often (ena amafuna pafupipafupi), difficult to refuse to them (e.g. during wedding ceremony ankhoswe tell wife that they should not refuse sex when husband wants). I suggested that in our country when can just say we have a head ache or are menstruating. Hm, saying you’re ill could work, but for ‘period’ they will just say: ndione - show me.

Two boys passed by, one of them, Fulanki, wanted to marry Jane and came now to inquire about J: he had heard that she had gotten married, but found no one at GVH’s compound. They met with Modesta on her way to here, who said she doesn’t know anything. Father of J had also complained about her behavior moving around with boys, then J had replied whether he would be supplying her with all she wanted, then father has stopped talking to her. Blessings said: Kuli matenda, maARV akusowa kuchipatal, kulibe okwanira [There is this disease, ARVs are lacking in the hospital, there is not enough]. Those married have to stay at home while husband is out finding money, possibly coming home with the disease (nothing a wife can do about it) - but girls they can at least still choose the right partner.

Alisa, friend of Jane, is in relationship with someone from [small crossroads market], but also with Levison, according to the women. They meet in his field...When these girls fall ill they will be stealing chicken, because when with that disease people want more food. Phingi had said a similar thing earlier, when she came to inquire/probe about Livia’s HIV status: when ill with that disease you will even want the birds that you see flying in the air - laughing.

At funeral people had asked about me, women told them I am staying in Mudzi B, and that they all go to learn how to knit here. Others said they will come to greet and also learn to knit. Were encouraged by Mudzi B women: we are enjoying there.

Some maize stems and cobs are really getting dry now, some cobs evening bending side ways already.
Grace and Ada at borehole, Grace said to Ada that she saw the father of Ada’s child visiting her. Lucy confirmed, first time since he left her just after baby was born, she said: maybe because he sees that the child is now growing up (?). at borehole no insinuation about him giving her money or sleeping together, they (Ada & man) only chatted pakhonde.

Yesterday at Kima’s: she was complaining to friend that the chairman of their soya club has run off with the 3500mk received for the soya that the club cultivated and was supposed to share. She was peeling mseula from this harvest to plant again, saying that there will still be enough rain.

Chisoni passed by on way back home after checking the maize on her field. Ate 2 maize cobs at her field and bought 3 more to eat today. Complained about the “American” chemicals that she is now using for her hair, is it not growing enough, so she will change to the “soft & free” chemical. Dorica shaved her head because in primary (and some secondary) schools girls are told to keep their hair short. Such things as letting their hair grow they should do later, when they find their ways through other means than from their parents.

Grace: saw father of your child yesterday came to you.

Ada: yes, he came to see the child, may be he wants to give me another child because this one is now 6 months.

Grace just repeated, laughing: yes he will give you another child now this one is 6 months.

Kingsley passed by with younger boy and soon after they returned with 2 maize cobs. GVH and Sofia are still at M. village to perform some more ceremonies for 3 days (getting up at 4am to cry for some minutes eg).

Livia came in morning to roast some maize, there is no fire there, she said, knowing that Gertrude makes fire every morning. Livia said no nkuni at home, but we saw a lot some days ago, may be just ulesi, Gertrude thinks. Gertrude reminded her of one day when Gertrude went to fetch firewood and Livia laughed at her because there was too much sun, but at least I have firewood now while you have not!

Amila is not yet eating maungu from her field, in March she says, haevesting maize not until April, 6-8 weeks from now. Gertrude laughs, can’t belief, if we harvest in March, A said, we have more weevils.

About Ada being visited by father of her child, may be he came back because now he has something to offer again? During njala season no means to share with her?

Bit of rain at dusk.
Rosa - daughter of [Bicycle maker] - has own cotton field at [tiny crossroads market] where she worked a lot during her December holiday break.

Lainess - daughter of Auleria (both her and Rosa at [large commercial estate] secondary school, form 3), is in relationship with son of Venesi who built house for Pamela and is now in SA.

**Monday Feb 23** - no rains in night, clouded morning. Rain start at 9:30 am.

Amila came at 7 am to go get all the firewood that her husband chopped together, but Gertrude was still preparing breakfast, mashed potatoes and maize cobs (roasted for me, boiled for her). Gertrude asked how much of the money (500mk) she [Amila] had given to her husband, first she answered 100, then 200mk. He had said that is was a lot of money, more than just for batteries, now he would also buy cigarettes. I am surprised she has given him so much, she didn’t need to. Afraid of him (that he may found that she kept money from him), hoping to please him, feeling the pressure to hand over all money to husband?

She also went to hospital to buy medicine for 50mk for the infected eyes of her baby. Plans to buy 2 plates with this money too, so that she and kids don’t have to wait for husband to finish eating. Bought 30mk matemba and husband begged another 20mk.

Ada passed by with bucket of water to Chikondi in Mudzi A, wants to bring her some medicine and since she would be going all that distance she better not got empty handed but bring her also some water.

Innocent left at 4am with Fatima and kids to [nearest tradingcenter] hospital. Jasmine’s husband escorted them to F. village because of darkness. They wanted to be the first to receive treatment, Jasmine told us this on her way to borehole, but she is still suffering from malaria.

In Gertrude’s home village nobody has gone to SA (they are just growing tomatoes and potatoes). At Mangochi many did go, but just to buy items there to sell in Malawi (cellphones, tv screens, blankets, clothes, big grocery shops would place orders).

Yesterday about manure, Jasmine also said that the good thing about manure over fertilizer is that when there is a lot of sun/not enough rain manure keeps the soil moist, while fertilizer does not. Amila does not make manure, but does leave the maize stems between the ridges after harvest.

Went with Amila to her field after breakfast to bring the first pile of firewood to our kitchen, all 3 of carrying mitolo, tied with grasses. She had told her husband she received 500mk and gave him 100 for batteries. Then he begged for more, to also buy fodya, so she gave him 20mk extra. Plans to buy a bottle of sobo squash (1 ltr for 200mk) because the hospital told her so, to add blood for the children, her child was coughing, then Amila joked: kachirombo! And said that of everybody who is ill, people are gossiping that, that one has kachirombo = HIV positive. Told of how Emra had said to Jeneti when they were fighten: Don’t you provoke people, don’t forget that you have the
Kachirombo [the virus = HIV]!” everybody was surprised to see Emra coming to knit yesterday, after the Ntaba theft episode. The morning when Emra passed, she also greeted us friendly. Last month Amila sold a chicken at 200mk to buy maize. On our way back with the nhkuni one of A’s young sons walked infront of me and suddenly dived into a maize field when he saw a little bird fly in. A son of Sofiawas stung by some insect when trying to catch birds in the fields too, next day eyes all swollen. After piling the nhkuni in our kitchen A went to Lovely (now staying at Fatima’s ex-house) who had told her to come get some mseula which she had harvested from her field, free of charge.

Jasmine came by to chat because Innocent & g’children are to [nearest tradingcenter], her husband and Sofia at M. village for the last funeral ceremony. She felt very alone and asked Gertrude how she keeps up with it when I am not here, “ndazolowera” [I got used to it], Gertrude answered. Jasmine told her son (husband of Sofia) who had come to attend the funeral that he should be taking care of Sofia and their 5 children, compared him to the husband of GVH who started moving around, marrying other women, catch the disease and eventually moving back to his first wife who was the only one willing to take care of him at the end of his life. If this son will be moving around he may also catch the disease, while Sofia is a good one, she likes/satisfied with married life. Son just stayed quiet and took 2 of his sons to take care of them while Sofia stays at M. village for the funeral ceremonies. Just before dying husband of GVH had earned a lot of money by selling his cows, one of his wives now ran off with 30000mk. The rest is still with GVH, and will also get all the money from his cotton field, Jasmine was telling.

Chisoni passed by with nkhwani [pumpkin leaves] incl flowers to be drying. Lunch: rice, nkhwani, eggs with pumpkin flowers and tomato.

Hilda also drying maize, complaining about the lack of sun today. Wants to go to the chigayo, but is not yet dry enough. Josepheine said about drying maize from her current yield: “no money to buy, therefore already taking from field prematurely and speed up drying by putting it in sun.

Asked Dora how she had succeeded in sending away her first husband. He never helped her in the field, just went drinking and dancing all the time, didn’t provide salt or clothes. She was happy they didn’t have a child together [Had 1 son, “husband even failed to buy clothes for his own child”, son with wife & 2 kids lives next to Dora now]. She went to complain to the ankhoswe and later paid 20mk to the chief to show that she was really serious (Ankhoswe and later chief kept encouraging her to stay married, may be he will change. Then she decided to go to chief, who said the same, at second visit gave him a letter again explaining the issue to show she was serious. Eventually went to pay the 20mk.). The husband then said that he would change. He had already married someone else and she didn’t want to be with 2 wives, & didn’t think he would change. She persisted and eventually he agreed and moved to his other wife. After about a month from the time she went to the ankhoswe. Then she managed by working hard in field which had more fertility then. Had lot of maize and sold other crops. He has now grown up, seen the behaviour of others and behaves better = helps on the field and provides for his family. D said that it was fine that I asked her questions, good that I will see/ understand how Malawian women are proposed and then left behind etc/Malawian marriages.

Sofia came back from M. village in morning, the sons that her ex-husband had taken are back again too.
GVH will return in late afternoon today.

My bike is still not finished, [Bicycle maker] and wife even left to Balaka together this morning, not back in afternoon.

Jeneti also drying masamba, some put the maize to dry on mphasa, others just on the sand. Lovely and Fissa were peeling mseula, both to replant and to eat as ndiwo.

Fissa also drying masamba.

Went with Amila for the second pile of firewood, said that although some are saying that Ndaba went back to Mangochi, he and Ainessi came back to visit Emra today, together.

Pamela came to hair braided (we found her earlier playing bawo in front of Hilda’s house, with Ada & baby on mat to it, baby ill: “coughing”). Ada, Kondwani, Modesta, Lovely (young one), Vanessa, Emra, Ellesi, Chisoni came to knit. Discussed about the maize thief that was caught recently, the announcement that Joyce Banda (runner with Mutharika for next elections) will visit [small crossroads market] on Wednesday (some will go, others not “as she will be eating all the gift money herself in the end anyway”), the 40th day funeral ceremony for husband of GVH (the family will count the days with stones or maize, by day 20 start to ccollect enough food & prepare: ndiwo, thobwa, tea etc for all attendants). Vanessa said she had to go home to prepare nsima for her husband coming home from work, was approved of by others because he is the one who brings money. Today already 23 (of month), he will soon get his salary (last day of month).

Earlier met with Hamra on her way to borehole. She had been ill, but somebody had gone to the hospital in Balaka for her, pretending to have her symptoms and receiv medicines.

Mrs Ntawanga ordered a knitted/closhed bag for school books in blue (everybody wants blue, some black, some green). Joked to her young daughter Livia by addressing her as ‘amayi a Joy’.

Kingsley came to greet after playing football, said he went to play because no more work on the field (kulima), would otherwise just be eating maize all day.

Women knitting also discussed that people used to say that children that grow up in house without father will not be able to walk (about Ada and baby). But comforted each other that many children in this village have grown up without father and are able to walk. They suspected this fable was just a way of parents to encourage couples to stay together.

Dora and Belita both said that if a woman is serious about divorcing her husband she can manage to send him away. But some continue chatting with him, etc, and then he will think you are not serious and refuse to go.
When Chenawe was (among) the first to dry maize from her current yield, she used a rasp to kukonola, the cobs were not dry enough to do it by hand yet.

Ada went to ganyu with mother in past months. Charity has already married again. Everywhere one can see people eating chimanga, even women with water buckets on head etc.

Drizzly all throughout day, no hard rains.

Gertrude apologizing when asking me few questions about my sisters, laughing ashamed = lii, now I am the one asking you many questions!

Feb 24, Tuesday - short but hard rainfall in night, morning blue sky.

Amila said she is a member of cotton club, everybody could register. Means she can get seeds and mankhwala without paying for it, just receiving less money when selling the cotton. Both for members and no-members both pay 250 for a bottle of mankhwala. Hamra is not a member of cotton club and indeed paid 250 for a bottle of pesticide. Amila thinks that some prefer not to be a member so that when selling they get the full price for their cotton.

When people speak about kachirombo they really only mean AIDS, at not any other virus eg the causing chifuwa, they don’t know chifuwa is caused by virus too, says Gertrude.

Husband of Sweetness came at 6:30am, to ask whether anything had been decided on the Ndaba catching issue or whether we had just decided to leave it. Gertrude was surprised he hadn’t been confirmed by either GVH or chief Mudzi A. Ah, he said, GVH often says she will do certain things and then won’t. he will now find some friends at [nearest trading center] where he sells his fish and try to catch him. We shouldn’t let anyone know about this, just pretend that we are still waiting for the decision to be made by the chiefs.

husband of Sofia had only taken their sons from Mudzi B to M. village, to be with mother, not home with him to Balaka. He has given her 500mk.

Daughter of [Bicycle maker] came to bring her bicycle for me to borrow, saying that her parents had gone to Balaka (or Ntcheu, where daughter is not getting better and couldn’t pay for transport) on that and my bike! The wife came home on their bike but he is still gone on mine. Sent massage that he will bring it today afternoon, and whether I could please give his daughter 1000mk, which I did but feel I shouldn’t have. First he promises to finally have it finished and delivered by Sunday, then he disappears on it on Monday morning!

Passing Mphatso (daughter of Rosemary) at her house who said that she was getting ill all the time, getting better, then ill again. Gertrude joked while continue walking: kachirombo! Mwina laughed P, run to the hospital to get tested!
Jane at borehole said she is now staying in Mudzi B 24/7 - I have grown up now….. will stay with GVH.

Went to GVH to give our condolences and 500mk (pepani tili ndi chisoni, zimachitika). Ah, husband had bee so ill, for over 3 years. Had been her first and only husband, all her children are his, but he was the one who went off to marry others. At least he worked hard till the end and left her a big field of cotton. Used some of the money she received via Esnart to contribute a bag of maize and 3 packets of sugar to the last ceremony yesterday that was attended by many who had to be fed. He had said that he wanted to be buried here near his children, but because he was a chief there it was decided that he be buried at M. village.

Greeted Sweetness (wanted to ask how she had succeeded in sending away her previous husband, but her current husband was fixing his bike on the khonde where we were sitting, so didn’t ask). She is pregnant again, had 4 small piles of tomatoes laid out on empty bag next to road. Offered us 2 chimanga chootchta which we declined, had just had breakfast with that. When we passed by later she seemed to have a small plastic bag with matemba, drying maize destroyed by termites, doesn’t know whether mankwala roist, said: kulibe, then Gertrude said she has seen some black poison used to protect wood in houses.

Walked for a while behind a BS woman carrying a basin with tomatoes and an empty bag folded on top (to be displaying her tomatoes later). Walks around through villages to buy, for 300-250mk per big basin and sell at J. village. Doesn’t know how much profit is because people just buy bit by bit. Is not growing her own tomatoes, currently many women selling their own tomatoes at [small crossroads market], therefore she decided to go to J. village to sell. But few are buying, because most have their own tomatoes. Before, she went to Balaka to buy, now just in villages, easy to find.

Then walked into Lizzie and other young woman staying near her while on our way to Christina to also ask her now she succeeded in sending away her husband, but found her gone to [nearest tradingcenter] , having left behind her small child who was looked after by an older son (8-12 yrs). He didn’t know what mother had gone to do. Lizzie was carrying a big dengu full of chimanga of which the stems had been destroyed by termites. We started kutonola, will be dried in the sun for about 2 days, then made into mgaiwa. Hybrid is more often destroyed by termites, but this was local variety. The other woman (widowed, young, doesn’t see reason to marry again, forgot her name) said that the same amount of ufa will be used to make nsima, not different. For hybrid, always more ufa is needed for same amount of nsima. Only disadvantage of drying maize in sun in stead of on stem is that risk of weevils is higher. When weevils attack maize they simply eat it, then only some ufa and small parts of maize will be found (and will still be eaten by people). In general, risk of weevils is higher in hybrid maize too, mankwala ["medicine"/pesticide] does exist and most do apply = actellic super dust. Two bottles needed for 50kg, last year a bottle costed 140-150mk, to be bought at ADMARC, Monsanto etc. Not all people apply as they are supposed to, eg 1 bottle for 50kg, weevils may still come, even though mankwala is
applied. Hybrid is kept in bags so as to easier apply this chemical, most people will also keep local maize in bags in house, afraid of thieves. And many people will be selling bit by bit for very low prices, “Having forgotten how expensive it was during njala”. Was 85mk/kg, then will sell for 20mk/kg, each time that a woman needs some money, eg for chigayo [maize mill] or soap, matemba [dried fish] , nyemba [beans], she will say to one of her children: kagulitse ["go sell some"]. Next day again: kagulitse, will sell to vendors who store the maize until njala [hunger season] and sell for high prices then. This will stop when people start selling their cotton, for those who grew cotton, that is. She did, is a member of club, thinks she will find over 10.000mk. has no plans yet on how to use the money, I ask whether she intends to buy maize with it, if prices are still as low then she will, she answered (but I can’t know whether she had thought of this herself too). Lizzie served us about 6 chimanga chootcha [roasted maize cobs] of which I ate only one to their surprise: I hadn’t become fully Malawian yet, being full after 1 maize cob (plus 1 at breakfast), they easily eat 5 these days besides nsima. Iii, like that you will be eating the whole field before harvest, said Gertrude laughing. The woman asked whether we in NL grow maize too and commented that she would go really hungry if she would go to my country, because lacking nsima.

1631 I heard several pigs, at Christina’s house and from somewhere else behind the maize. This maize had not been given fertilizer, some manure but mochedwa because she hadn’t planned to grow maize there, may be mbatata later. But because she became afraid of snakes in the bushes that overgrew the plot she decided to clear and plant maize after all. Her maize harvest is partly destroyed by floods and termites.

1632 Lizzie’s husband has gone to Ntcheu, he is looking for ways to find money here in stead of going back to SA. He was not happy here? I asked, she just laughed, “To see the difference”. The full dengu of maize cobs will be about half a dengu of chimanga chotonola will be enough for app 1 week nsima (twice a day: masana & madzulo, her and kids).

1633 Eveles is still working on her rice field, staying with Alma (except for Friday’s, then she goes home to attend mosque from there). Alma said that Eveles complains that she is not getting better (chifuwa) but still gets up every morning go to her field, working on while the sun climbs high.

1634 Livia came by shortly, was told by mother to go get maize from her (Livia’s) field to make ufa. They have already emptied and eaten a small plot with Livia’s maize behind their house. Why not take from mother’s field now? Gertrude asked, Livia said that mother had just decided that they should first be eating the maize from Livia’s fields. But where will you find food when you start staying on your own then? Ah, don’t know, my mother will see what to do then. Son of Elube passed by and told Livia that her husband from [nearest tradingcenter] had called to say that Livia should go to see him. So you are still talking? Asked Gertrude, Livia confirmed, will go there when she finds time, but also still seeing the boyfriend at Balaka, he gave her 2 pots now, which she hided at her aunt at Nd. village, young mother of Phingi. Will wait for
boy from [nearest tradingcenter] to call again, see what he has to say and then if she finds time to go.

Sofia came to greet, going to [clinic] with youngest son Harry, who turns 1 on 4th March, but can’t walk yet like Hana who turns 1 in March. He doesn’t even seem able to crawl, because he has been ill so often, Sofia says. Now he has a horrible cough, she goes together with Thokozani whose mother is ill. Will pretend her child is ill to get medication to give to Rosemary. Sofia is wearing a fancy jeans skirt (with bare feet) which still looks like new but she got when she was still staying with her husband in Zomba, who traded sugar. Gertrude has seen a picture of that time, says they lived in a big, nice house, and Sofia was fatter then, and so was Harry. Ah, Sofia looked at her arms somewhat scared, I haven’t really lost weight, have I?

Chisoni, Kondwani & Vanessa came to knit end of afternoon and discussed the marriage proposal that Dorica received from a boy who came from Blantyre and was moving around with a friend, looking for a future wife. Alole, said Chisoni: she should accept, the others agreed, he is still young (mwana) but he has a job and does BS. I asked why they said she should accept: she won’t be able to find school fees, said Chisoni, and even if, added Vanessa, she won’t be able to find work if she would finish her school. “Alibe” was the first answer that Chisoni gave, this boy will give her a future, more so than continuing school would. Dorica did not accept yet, he is over there again now, discussing. I asked: so he is giving her soap now, and a skirt? No, she haven’t accepted yet, I was corrected, ndi mnyamata wabwino? Oh yes, oh yes, know him because he is originally from nearby. And repeated that he has ntchito ndi geni.

Pamela seemed to wear a new (second hand) skirt yesterday. Today both Joy and Livia seem dressed in new clothes. Joy is wearing a second hand white princess dress with red strawberries and TEVA shoes, Livia is wearing the skirt and shoes she received from her lover in Balaka, a new blanket as chitenje around coughing Hana on back and a new top. Later: Livia wanted a picture of her and kids but found a lot of women knitting here (today also Haliday). When all had gone and she told me, it was already too dark: mawa [tomorrow].

The one who came to look for a wife and proposed to Dorica is a son of Mrs Ntawanga. Has a job in Blantyre ans also his own grocery shop, and is looking for a wife who can run the shop for him. Has been in Blantyre for almost 5 years now, and has never been married yet. Bola than the first one Dorica was with, the woman said, he was married somewhere else she found after she accepted to marry him, so didn’t marry him. May be this was the one who had impregnated her while she was still in school and then aborted. Goes to school irregularly anyway, so better accepts this after, all women felt. Palibe phindu lake, there is no benefit for going to school. Gertrude says: mother grows tomatoes and cotton, must be able to come up with the 3 monthly 1700mk for secondary school.

Chisoni came with young girl, others joked that since the girl was following her
everywhere she may have been told to do so by Venesi’s husband, because she is related to him. Chisoni said she could just chat with whichever boy she would want and just felt the girl that he is merely a friend, the girl wouldn’t know the difference.

Feb 25, Wednesday: Balaka → Lilongwe

Livia was dressed up so much yesterday because she wanted me to take a picture of her and kids, but found many women knitting so didn’t ask for it. I asked Gertrude about her clothes, who said that the blanket she had tied around her was given by father of Hana when Livia had just given birth and was still in the hospital. He also gave 2 pieces of zitenje and a set of clothes. The dress that Joy was wearing Gertrude had seen before, but Hana seemed to have new shoes.

Sofia has given us a plate of eggplants again. They grow in her field although she didn’t plant them, but she doesn’t like them. Her hunger/need for food is not that big, apparently... But then again, ndiwo in abundance at the moment (nkhwani especially, and therere). Also in our maize field pumpkins are getting big now - these we planted after rains started, like others, so others should be having eatable pumpkins by now too. GVH said she will make sure nobody takes our maungu now that we have left the village to get Gertrude’s school certificate replaced. We gave our key to Kingsley, he will sleep in our house to protect.

Cycled for only 1.5 hour to Balaka - even though we had some problems with my bag falling off (so I ended up carrying it on my back like a baby), Gertrude’s shoes bothering her (so took them off and on back carrier of bike), my tire going flat (but just there are quite a number of road side shelters with bike repair services so with some effort the tire was pumped again for 10MK). I can easily cycle to Liwonde one day - to see Emily there and eventually get the typer of Susan Watkins to type my notes into computer. Then spend over 3 hours at police station just to get a typed report - report was already there, Gertrude had gone the very same day after finding out about the theft. Had to be looked for in an unordered pile of papers of course, man went through the whole pile 3 times to find it. Paid 500MK to get the typed report (“To whom it may concern…”). The men assured us that they will come to catch Ndaba whenever we find him, “he deserves 10 years imprisonment!” But how to find proof after such a long time, I wondered. Ah, we have our ways to make him confess/tell what he did with the stolen items…” I was assured.

A girl was giving her report while we were waiting, just in the same room. She had already been at the police station for three days, said the people were nice there, but she was tired of it now and wanted to go home. Sixteen years old, married a 31 yr old man 2 months ago, because she was at a Mission that paid her school fees but she had to fetch water, cook etc etc, preferred to get married to this man that she said she liked. To then find out that he already had 6 other wives and has a disease of liking sex - she was now told by his brother. She seemed fine with this though. Taking care of the kids of all these women now. Until accused of stealing items from the house by the other women and taken to police by the husband. The men laughed, joked with her: Why did you marry this man?? Just liked him, and tired of all the chores she had to do at Mission, he works. So what else beside cooking and fetching water did you have to do then? - finding it normal she had to do these. Ah, that’s the problem of women here in Balaka, the men (my age and younger) said, both to her and involving Gertrude in conversation. They like men with money too much. They wanted to let her go too, decided just to make the report and let her go after paying some money. Earlier we had seen her walking up and down with buckets of water, with a police woman following her everywhere.

Left our bikes at DADO’s office. Ms Mattiya was disappointed I had not come to see her, had not let them know that I am back in vlg. Had come to see me twice, but found me in Lilongwe (=Netherlands). “We are in agriculture too, we are colleagues!” Will come to see me next week.
Then minibus to Lilongwe (1000MK/person, 3 hours), hopped on next minibus to Area 25 (100MK, 1 hour). Where Gertrude was going to take bike taxi to school (50/70MK, 20 minutes), and I headed back to Monja at Kapani.

When at Kima when she was brewing kachasu and woman passed by to sell tomatoes, friend of Kima said “1 Kwacha”. I thought she was aan het onderhandelen, starting ridiculously low. But Gertrude said she meant 10 MK - so no onderhandelen, everybody just knows and excepts (current) price.

Thinking in minibus, seeing all the men (and only few women) besides road desperately trying to sell their merchandise (cabbage, potatoes, madasi, roasted maize at Dedza for 20MK etc) about people just struggling for day-to-day survival. For which condom use is not helpful...

Jones is still with his wife: she had threatened to leave all their 3 children with him if he would send her away, but he can’t afford to pay anyone to take care of the smaller ones while he goes to work every day/night, so decided to keep her...

Feb 26, Thursday: Lilongwe --> Zomba

I walked from Monja’s house in Area 47 to Crossroads for a frustrating internet session until Gertrude passed by in minibus and I jumped in. At market we first bought a new phone face for Tumanene, 400MK, in a shop that according to Dorine’s husband was the cheapest in town. I’ll just tell Tumanene that it costed 300... Kim Dionne emailed that Susan Watkins pays 50MK per page typed into computer, but that by now the typer may ask for 100MK per page - that is going to be very costly, so better do as much typing myself... Maybe - I daydreamed in the minibus to Zomba (app 5,5 hours) - I will go to Zomba next week, the mid one of the 3 that I still have in Malawi. Don’t want to put my flight on earlier date, in case harvest may start, would really want to be there... And then in Zomba go to library and maybe spend some hours typing handwritten fieldnotes into computer. Best the notes of Gertrude maybe, to have them better into my head!

A woman dropped of some bags of sugar for the bus driver to give to her mother in Liwonde. She took his telephone number, but also the number of Gertrude, as a witness, to check if he really gave the sugar. Gertrude was called several times by them before we reached Liwonde. When at Liwonde the bus driver did remember to hand over a pack with calenders oid, but kind of seemed to deliberately forget the sugar while Gertrude reminded him. Only a bit later did he go into it, when we had already passed the place. Ah, will give it tomorrow... Arguing that he is often given things, that he needs people to trust him so that he will really give, don’t worry. He asked his conductor (collecting the money, organizing who needs to get in and out where) where he will be sleeping in Zomba tonight. Ah, don’t know... You should take another wife here (where you can always stay), the driver advised. I have stopped with that, the conductor said, I was just losing my money to all these women while my wife (in Lilongwe) was just staying alone.

While in the bus there was an elaborate program on radio with what seemed to me as 3 people talking, 2 men and a woman. They said that initiation rituals which encouraged girls to try sex spread HIV, and the encouragement of girls to test/strengthen their fertility by having sex after starting menstruating too. Parents should be advising their young children to abstain ivp encourage sexual experimenting. They complained about the many areas where there are no condoms available in the local shops. And about the fact that women are ashamed to have condoms, afraid to be accused of prostitution.
Kaliati closed a radio station that “in stead of empowering the community by talking about things as 
HIV/AIDS, importance of education, food security etc, they criticize the leadership of this country 
while the youth should learn to keep up our tradition of respecting elders.” Wow, her discourse is 
complete donor-pleasing, just a long string of the current buzz-words matched together.

At dinner in Annie’s Lodge (Gertrude said, laughing exusingly, that she had never been in a lodge 
before. Paying 7000MK/room, taught Gertrude how to use tv, she asked how knife and fork are 
supposed to be held and wants me to make picture of her eating breakfast with knife and fork in 
luxurious restaurant) we talked about Mudzi B: Sofia wants to have her eldest daughter (to be 8 this 
year) to be initiated this year. Phingi then said that she wants to prepare for Joy’s initiation too, 
stocking maize for thobwa, buying new clothes. But others told her that Joy is still very young, should 
wait a few years. Also Fissa and chief Mudzi B will have their daughters initiated this year, said Sofia, 
many will. Also boys will be initiated (on the field next to Amila’s, who said that that’s the reason 
why her field will be cleared through fire, because the by then dry grasses will be lit there to build a 
temporary house for the boys to be initiated in). The boys will be in that house the whole month of 
Aug, girls will only be informed in a house from half till end of Aug - so all will come out together. 
Earlier women had already commented that: Jane and friends will not be drinking beer and dancing 
like at last year’s end celebration, they are now married or pregnant, will be ashamed to behave like 
that. On the day that Gertrude and I came to check on the house, the end celebration took place, 
and supposedly we had then seen Jane & friends at Kima’s drinking beer - I can’t remember.

Livia left first husband because he wanted to sell Joy, and they were generally fighting often. Came 
back from Balaka to Mudzi B, got into relationship with father of Hana, even married, but only for a 
week then he disappeared. Two months pregnant Livia joined first husband again and they went to 
stay with his family. But he did not treat her well: did not provide enough food, sometimes beating 
er. He tried to persuade Livia to kill the baby and cheat her mother that she had miscarried. At 8 
months pregnant she moved back to mother, who says Livia had gotten very thin by then.

Gertrude is surprised that none of the women with husbands is SA does a BS: “they just wait for their 
husbands to send money and then they just eat it!” Are indeed in opportunity to start BS with money 
that they are sent regularly... So when there is no need, rather not. Except for woman with 
restaurant in [nearest tradingcenter] - but she was told to start this by husband. And Blessings selling 
blankets & Esnart borrowing out money for high return rates - both told so by husbands.

Gertrude told Amila to tell her husband to come and chop the boomstronk that she brought to our 
kitchen for firewood. But A kept saying she will come and do it herself. But you gave your husband 
his money for batteries, and even more, while what it is the use for your family to buy batteries at 
this time, you need food! Ah no, can’t tell him, he wouldn’t do it... The money I gave him belonged to 
him, because he was the one who chopped the wood, she further said.

Gertrude sees Evelin washing her clothes at borehole, and when we went to funeral she had 
(relatively nice) shoes on - she has some income coming from somewhere, but where??

Sofia will stay at Jasmine’s instead of moving to GVH (which would seem like the logical thing to do 
now that husband of GVH died, so GVH is alone, and Sofia is alone, and there is a spare house there, 
and Sofia has no house) because that would take off the pressure of her ex-husband to build her a 
own house. While when staying in the house that Innocent wants to move back into, Jasmine&fam 
may pressure their son to build the promised house for Sofia. When Sofia and husband moved to 
Balaka he started to date the daughter of their landlady. Gertrude puts it as: “He took her to the 
market/they went to the market together.” Until at one point he sent off Sofia and kids and the 23 yr 
old daughter of landlady now
moved in with him. Within one month both she and Sofia gave birth to his baby.

husband of Malita earning 1500-2000/month guarding shop at [small crossroads

market].

In Lilongwe it is expected that people will be eating fresh maize by next week. I am surprised to see few people selling fresh maize from Balaka (and other places maybe) in places where maize cannot be harvested yet. In newspaper a chidziwitso that the selling of fresh maize is prohibited within city limits - to prevent theft.

Feb 27, 2009 Friday - Zomba

Gertrude asked whether knife should be held left or right and was happy when she kind of managed to eat with fork and knife. Wanted a picture of herself having breakfast in the hotel's restaurant, “to remember...” She put butter, jam and peanutbutter all on one slice of toast. I was surprised she knew peanut butter: when she stayed with 'aunt' who promised to pay school fees for her but just had Gertrude babysit her children there was jam and peanut butter - but only for the children, Gertrude was not allowed to take. Also when the kids would eat meat, Gertrude was told to eat eggs. She accepted it all.

First went to check out Peter's Lodge: quite a walk from Annie's, MENOB (national exAmilation board) and University of Malawi Center for Social Research. Quite cheaper too, at 4200 for fine self-contained room with tv, but no internet. So decided to stay in Annie's Lodge - but no electricity all day so far! Then back to MENOB where people had just knocked of when we finally arrived yesterday. Ging voorspoedig. Besides police report and letter from Gertrude's school they also needed a letter from boss or church clarifying that she is speaking thruth - which I wrote right then and there. “Do you have a stamp?” No, but BS card. Will do. Pai 800MK and within 3 weeks they will send the certificate to ICRISAT.

Then on to Center for Social Research library - not very impressive. As was to be expected quite a mess. Journal for social research in Malawi, only 5 copies of Volume 16. After inquiring about other volumes I got a number of copies from 1972-1986. The clerk went through some large piles and came up with 3 documents which I all held found over internet already. The others I found myself were not impressive - had hoped on some in-depth localized details, but nothing new.


meetings; Promote coordination.


From the research sample, it was mostly the poorest people from Salima district and in Mzuzu district along the Lower Shire whose coping mechanisms involved eating wild plants. [which district studied? methods? institution?]

chitsinkho = meal of only ndiwo, esp masamba (geen proteine --> ruilen liever kip om voor bord ufa dan alleen de kip te eten).

The high demand for ganyu made those who could offer food & money take advantage of those in dire need of food to the extent that respondents reported having worked the whole day in maize or tobacco field simply to get a plate of full of maize. Many respondents said that when one went to look for ganyu, if it’s a maize field, the owner simply showed them a big piece of land to work on and when they asked how much they will be paid, the common response was that “if you want to do the work, just do it, we will see when you finish.” Thus the one providing ganyu could not negotiate and often ended up getting too little the work done. Similar to the findings in the study, Ellis et al (2003) also noted exceptionally poor bargaining with casual labor.

Divorce & early marriage as coping mechanism:

Food shortage affected social relationships. Discussions during FGDs indicated that a few men resorted to separation or divorce as a means of reducing their responsibilities over feeding their children and wife(s). This practice was reported in Chikwawa, Mzuzu, Salima & Kasungu districts. According to their responses, the husbands would find an excuse that would be the basis for divorce and in most cases, the husband just abandoned his family. “When you have more than 3 children, some husbands leave their wives to marry another woman who has no children so that they reduce the burden of having to feed the children.” FGD with female maize seller, Mzuzu boma market. It was also reported that some girls and even boys resorted to marrying earlier thinking that if it is just the two of them, they will manage to feed themselves unlike being saddled with the responsibility to help feed their siblings as well as their parents.

The men further said that they got ridiculed as not being man enough for failing to provide food and as a result wives withheld sex, food and other favors from their husbands.

After reading paper about courses, projects, politicians I realize how the enormous focus on HIV/AIDS is top-down opgelegd, geen main local community concern.

Gertrude happy that she now manages to eat with knife (although still struggling a bit). Yesterday she ordered chicken and rice, but today she choose spaghetti bolognaisse - which she had seen me eating yesterday, I saw her trying to copy het ronddraaien met vork. She seemed to like it. Laughed about me ordering gin-tonic and took a very small sip when I forced her too, said she was afraid she’d be laughing all evening now (would get drunk).

About cotton harvest: People told Gertrude they’ll be picking in morning, then each afternoon sell what they have picked that day. And so on for 1 or 2 weeks. So they don’t get the full amount of money at once, but day by day bits.

Feb 28, 2009 Saturday - Zomba --> Mudzi B

At breakfast (Gertrude hot chocolate & fried eggs with chips) Gertrude told me some of the stories of the Nigerian
movies she watched on tv. And then about the woman with whom she stayed after coming from Dedza looking for school fees. She lived in Area 12, in a 20.000MK house. Now moved to Area 25, where she built her own house and a bigger house (renting out for 30.000MK) on a plot which she surrounded with a brick wall. She had many boyfriends, who all gave her money, that's why she was able to build those houses quickly. She would go spend a night with one and come back with cement, spend night with another and come back with iron sheets, others would give her 20.000 or 30.000. Works as secretary at MEJN, earning 65.000MK then, 70.000MK now (!!!). Would often go to the lake, or to Crossroads just to have lunch. Was able to keep boyfriends unknowing of the others, some found out, got angry and left her. But she is not enjoying the acquired wealth: when her houses were finished she started getting ill. Had a friend who died of the disease, after which she got into relationship with the husband of this friend - maybe thinking she was dead herself already anyway, Gertrude says. She used to put on mini skirts when going to work when she was still fat and attractive. But now only wearing long skirts and blouses and a scarf around her neck hiding all the sores on her body. People are laughing at her now. She stays with a new partner now who wants to marry her, even tough she is clearly unhealthy. He just stays, drives around in her car all day while she is at work. People say he is just with her for her money. What is the benefit for her then, I asked. Nothing! Gertrude said puzzled. All children are at boarding school now.

Other women were saying that they had working husbands, but are not able to build such houses at this one did - insinuating the many boyfriends she must be having. Gertrude said: She could build those houses so quickly because she had so many boyfriends and that is why she is ill now.

Climbed in minibus in Zomba with sign Balaka-Ntcheu and paid 700MKpp for the whole trip to Balaka. But at city borders we were transferred to another minibus, and at Mangochi turnoff again. There we were put in an empty bus so had to wait very long until the driver was willing to go (3 others had gotten in). The conductor didn't want to give us the money he was given for taking us to Balaka so that we could at least enter one of the fuller buses passing by, “tukupita” he assured us. At on point the driver started the engine and pretended to be driving off for quite some time - a tactic that indeed gave him 1 extra costumer...

Entering Balaka bus depot I saw a small simple structure with painted on it’s wall that it offered internet and typing services. No internet though - problems with line. Just today? No... Ofwel, geen line. But 2 computer, scanner, printer and a boy and young woman who said they charge 70MK per typed page. I said I have a lot of handwritten notes to be typed, and asked for better price - 50MK. Is same as Susan has been paying for getting her field journals typed, so I'm fine with that. Now fingers crossed that they do a good job. I left the photocopies of my second notebook with them and will go and check next Saturday.

Had the flat tire of my bike repaired beside road at 60MK (double price because says he found 2 problems). When we reached Fatima's home vlg big gray cloud, perfect opportunity to chat with her while sheltering. Maar vraas dat ik wat te hard van stapel liep, en dat Gertrude me niet voldoende beschermd. Immediately about divorce: He was the one who sent her [Fatima] back to mother. But she was also fed up with his behavior of coming home late (10PM) often. This is how she put it, only later saying that she knew about some of his relationships with other women, among whom Thokozani. “Boys/men in Mudzi B have the habit/tendency to have relationships with women nearby them.” At least he had already built her a house, by himself, unburnt bricks, leaking roof (were sitting inside sheltering for heavy rain). Small first room and smaller chipinda with mosquito net and blanket. Today she is going to Mudzi B to have the ankhoswe (Ayama & husband of Malita on husband’s side, so also women!) decide on the division of their property. H said she would be taking the plates and chitini (tin bucket) “because she has the child.” Blanket etc he would be keeping. He has sent her 4 bars of soap during the last months in which they lived separate, “so he is not taking well care of me and
child.” But she was happy to be back home (group of houses with mother, sisters and mother of mother). Not worried about having no husband to take care of her, father recently came back from Lilongwe where he works and assured her he will be helping her. Parents are still together, but mother stayed behind because plan is to build a big house here with his salary, so mother will coordinate that. While still sitting inside after rain had finished a girl came to give half a loaf of white bread, a pack of sugar (0.5 kg?) and 4 cola powder packages - brought by husband of Elube for his grandchild (today last day of month, so pay day?). But didn’t come to see Fatima - Gala was elsewhere sheltering for rain, so he may have seen her. Says now she had been in Mgira with husband for 5 years - which would mean since 12! I don’t belief, but Gertrude does, says it happens often in south, after starting to menstruate. But Gala is about 2 years old. I asked Fatima if she started sleeping with husband at 12 too: no, but after 3 months. Asked her if she would allow Gala to get married at 12. No, at 19 is better age. Couldn’t answer why.

Difficult to cycle through mud.

Found everything in order at home. Picked up key at GVH - Kingsley had gone to football match at [tiny crossroads market] (many people had, heard loud yelling). GVH still acting very sad. Also got sores in her face now, she pointed out, and head aches...

Sofia and Innocent came to greet immediately. I came out with my hair down, about to put into fresh ponytail - they looked at it very surprised. Later asked whether I use chemicals too to get it like that. Said all was fine here, only coughing (kukosomola). But later, when also Molly and Kondwani joined them, they discussed animatedly that Dora’s husband has come back from Mangochi with fish, maybe for food or sale, and a big chikwawa. Dora was happy, even though both she and adult children (Dorica and brother) had always said they will chase him if he comes back, having had to cultivate the land all by themselves, son did ganyu for mother to be able to buy fertilizer. Maybe his new wife just had their baby, is about to - so he can’t sleep with her for 2 months, the women speculated. Kondwani said: Timanana kuti akabwera tiwathamangitsa koma ayi = we say that we will chase him if he comes back, but puntje-bij-paaljte we don’t. Dora probably happy with the fish he brought. Molly said she wouldn’t accept: Ine sindingalole, mwina akufuna adye nawo chimanga. - maybe he just comes back to eat your nsima. As seems the case with this husband of Dora. Men here behave like that, the women said, leaving when the work on the field needs to be done, and then appear again when harvest is about to. Kondwani said: Chimangichi - it’s this maize that makes men to come back or propose now (also referring to Venesi’s new boyfriend). Kondwani continued: say you would had been left with only 1 chitenje and then he comes back to you with another chitenje, plates, having lots of money, then you will accept...

Venesi passed with her boyfriend (he on bike, she walking, escorting him). The women discussed how this man has been heard to cough very loudly, people say he has cancer or TB or matenda (AIDS), so now Venesi will also be infected. Women also commented that she has a cellphone now, which she says her brother in SA sent her. Sofia then said that if she would have brothers in SA (sending money, blankets etc) she would not marry again/would not need a husband. Livia agreed, also mentioning how they could send her a cellphone (which is apparently her latest wish, said this also earlier that she really wants one, then I asked about the money that boyfriend had given her to buy one, she said he only gave 1500 while a phone costs 2000) and said, laughing, that she is only with her chibwenzi because he gives her money for soap and lotion. [BUT WHAT ABOUT LOVE, SEX, OTHER POSSIBLE BENEFITS OF HAVING PARTNER AVAILABLE??] They encouraged Gertrude to make sure I understood why they were laughing. I said to Livia: but you have your own maize, cotton, soon a sewing machine! Then Livia said that she will break up with him when she gets her own money through selling her cotton. Laughing again. Gertrude later says she thinks that’s unlikely, because at that time men have a lot of money too, so good to keep relationship = money flow going. Unfortunately Venesi then joined
Livia was not ashamed to tell the other women (at that moment Sofia, Kondwani and Gertrude) that last year she stole cotton from her father's field to find money. She would smuggle it to younger mother in J. village and later go to collect the money. And even though she has her own maize and cotton this year, she may still steal from parents' fields too, she added. Will also be selling her own maize secretly without mother knowing, and steal mother's when she is not around.

Women commented on Tinenenji passing by on way to Fatima's ex-husband: She doesn't know that his wife came by today to share the property.” Fatima said today that she doesn't know whether he is married and with whom he is.

Discussed that all GVHs were to go and receive a mobile phone today, but Group Mudzi B didn’t go, because still mourning over husband. She should have send someone to collect it for her, someone said. Sofia defended her saying that she probably didn’t think about it because of her grief.

When Molly joined us, Sofia grabbed the string around her neck to fish up the cellphone hanging in Molly's blouse. How did you get that? she asked. Livia answered for her: received from husband of course - but Gertrude was bathing so don’t know if I understood well. Gertrude says it’s the current cheap Zain & Telekom phone, at 2999MK. Nice flat one.

Molly asked Sofia about her ex-husband: Akabwera simumagonana? = When your husband comes, don’t you sleep with him? Sofia answered she stopped with that now because she is already failing to take care of the 4 kids that she has now.

Molly said her husband will be getting a lot of customers for tailoring BS at cotton selling season. Livia asked her about the current tomatoes prices. Said she gets 1500MK per dengu when selling to traders.

Rosemary is still crying over divorce with man that these women called Computer.

Women also discussed how in earlier years at funeral a play would be staged (chiwiro) at which people would act like the deceased. By a teacher, others would play students, actor playing teacher would imitate the things the deceased used to say etc. husband of GVH stopped this tradition because people were also slaughtering goats etc if this was something the deceased used to do.

Husband of Elube passed by smoking a cigarette. I commented that he must have received his salary today. Was confirmed. They worked till Feb 20, but had to wait week to get salary.

The women complained that they had been bored the last days, nothing to do now they couldn’t come here to knit and chat...

Tulipesi (husband of Viola) slaughtered his 2 goats to sell the meat to people in village, later paying back 150 smallest plates of maize (which they call 150MK of maize, with 1MK being small plate) per kg of meat. Within no time his meat had been sold. So, Gertrude concluded, even though at hunger season people say they will not be so stupid this year to spend their maize too easily, already now they are spending it on luxury items like meat.

Amila passed by after dark, relatively well dressed, with baby on back and daughter Esime (light skinned, app 8 yrs). Had been in hospital since Wednesday for Esime. Nobody had come to see or help her. Eventually the doctor himself had given his blood for the girl. She was lucky, others had died because of lack of blood. Many ill children, 5 sharing one bed, others on floor. Came back on bike taxi, had only 60MK, but uncle helped her by giving her 150MK to pay for the bike. [battery for husband’s radio costs 40MK, by the way]

Last days only sun until today afternoon rain (1 bui).

March 1, 2009 Sunday Mudzi B

In morning Sofia passed by with hands and head full of maize and pumpkin. Tumanene was
Sofia said that GVH received 12,000mk from her son in SA.

husband of Amila passed by and Gertrude asked him when he was coming to chop the wood we bought from him. Ah, just give me another 500mk and I will do it. No, you must finish this job we already paid you for. I will come, will come.....

Tumanene gave us g/nuts fresh from her field. She just picked a few, rest she leaves to dry in the field. These are suitable only for boiling and can only be kept for about a week. Emra wants to buy, with money Tumanene wants to buy sobo for her child who is not eating nsima (had malaria).

Daughter of Rashida indeed back back to school. Mother takes care of baby, buying milk to feed it, girl is in standard 8 repeating because last year pregnant during exams. After this to secondary school, grow a lot of cotton, can probably pay school fees with that, Gertrude thinks.

Sofia came to ask company to go together to her field to pick the lere [okra], is afraid to go alone: “tchire” [bush], may be some men may be hiding in the grasses and kill her. On our way she told that the husband of Jasmine advised his family to remember the days, when they did not have enough maize, when they were eating madea [maize grain skins]. Should not start eating a lot now that maize will be harvested. One of their grandsons that used to stay with them but during njala [hunger season] went back to J. village came to harvest all his maize and borrows husband of Jasmine’s bike to go to Mangochi to sell all that maize in stead of waiting for it to dry properly. Grandfather is now afraid that the boy went off to sell his bicycle. Is complaining that he thought that the boy was good…. Boy will sell to those people selling chimanga chootcha [roasted maize cobs].

Sofia also commented about Livia, for whom somebody has bought shoes and a skirt: soon she will be pregnant again by somebody who has cheated her. Or, I suggested, somebody is serious about marrying her, nah. Sofia laughed, she has too many boyfriends. Men know that and just take advantage of her, she is girlfriend material, not good for marriage. Furthermore, she doesn’t wash the clothes of her children often enough, just leaves them in a corner of the sleeping room. When a boyfriend comes there it will smell bad and he will not want to marry her. But will a boyfriend see her sleeping room before he marries her? When a woman has her own house he will come to visit and then it is easy to also check out the sleeping room. “Ndikumudziwa” = I know her, those clothes came from somebody who is cheating her.

The maize in Sofia’s field does not look good, a lot of weeds, small plants, yellowish. She says she applied fertilizer and did we, doesn’t know why it is not growing well. The other part of the field looks better, Gertrude says that indeed she didn’t hear Sofia say earlier that she sold her fertilizer, so much have applied it. But on some parts she didn’t apply because not enough. There are however some insects that are destroying the parts, other than termites. So she plans to rent out this field next year, without telling about the insects. Next year there will be hunger in
her family, she said. Is there no law that forces your husband to help you take care of your children? There is, must go to court to have it enforced, but need a strong person to visit you in court, who can stand up and speak loud etc. Her brother in SA has indeed encouraged her to go if his behaviour continues. They will go together when he comes back from SA. Also, her ex-husband promised to build her a house and if she starts to make problems now he may not do that. So first wait and see, repeats several times that she cultivated her field all alone. That is also why she hasn’t planted cotton but only maize.

On one field all the leaves of the maize plants had been taken off because the owner now also planted tomatoes between the maize plants.

Sofia has started making nsima from her field now, even though it is not dry yet. Bcoz she went without food for lunch, therefore decided. She advised Innocent to start eating by herself now too, “ukukula” - you are growing up. Ukukula uyanbe kuphika zakudya zako. Livia just said “may be”.

When I pointed out to Gertrude that Sofia yesterday said “if I had brothers in SA” and today that her brother from SA will help her in court. Gertrude thinks that Sofia has not been able to beg anything from brothers because she was married, but now things have changed.

Chisoni was first to come knitting today. Has been told by mother-in-law to start eating her own now even though it’s not harvest time yet, “koma ndilibe ndalama” [but I don’t have money], may be husband will send some when someone comes again, but for now has no money. So will be picking and drying maize from her field like some others are doing to find food.

Eventually many women came to knit: Kondwani, Grace, Vanessa, Ada, Chisoni, Esnart + Livia, Lovely, and Innocent. Esnart and Grace had hair braided, Vanessa was laughed at for having combed her hair, looking like a rasta. Said she left it like this because she wants Gertrude to braid her hair tomorrow. I undid Sofia’s hair after Molly left after undoing only half. Then Sofia had it redone by Gertrude…

Blessings came back from selling a chitenje from SA to someone who had sent massage that she wanted to buy.

Esnart just bought a big chitini for 950mk with money from SA.

Ada and Lovely failed to knit, Ada was laughed because she was the first to start learning here. Little later she left, Lovely kept trying till the end, laughing about herself for already trying a certain pattern for 3 days without succeeding. When she [Lovely] quickly went home to get money, to buy fish from passing by man vendor (also Kondwani 30mk and Esnart
Livia both bought 50mk), Blessings said Lovely is just lazy, thinking that knitting comes easy, not really trying to remember.

Grace said she had treated her hair with chemicals which she bought at 200mk, in 2 weeks she will treat it again (to make hair grow faster). So she finds money somewhere... Talking about Tulipesi selling goat meat for maize she said she cannot do that: better to stay without eating meat than exchange so much maize for it.

The women said that this year there are less pumpkins than last year. Last year were eating pumpkins earlier too.

The husband of Vanessa brought her thread from Balaka after getting his salary yesterday. One ball to start making a jersey for their baby daughter. Will bring the second ball later, encourages her to come knit here everyday. Bola, the others said, you have a husband who buys you thread, she [Vanessa] complained about the goats of Tulipesi eating her cotton, with which she wants to buy a cellphone.

The women joked that they want an examination to test their knitting skills. The winner should then be taken to Europe with me, or at least with Gertrude to Dedza to be eating potatoes there.

They were worried that I stayed in the house today because of the son of Esnart who always starts crying when he sees me.

Ada was also told by others to sit properly, legs together, not up and wide with skirt opened, have you not been initiated?

Laughed about funeral today at which people were crying and mourning while the woman who died was very old, not even getting out of the house anymore. They should be thankful that now she can finally rest!

Also joking about Vanessa’s home village, to which a bike taxi from Balaka costs 500mk, while to Mudzi B 200/250mk, “is like a town compared to your village!”

Women and fish vendor discussed that in Mudzi B more people buy fish than in Mudzi A. Laughing about adult school, how difficult it had been for some to even learn how to hold a pencil. Only one woman was really serious, couldn’t write at all but when schooling stopped because of rain could write her name, others were just chatting.
In cotton field of husband GVH a grandson and friend (son Rosemary) weeding. Must be ganyu, says Gertrude, otherwise other grandsons like Kingsley would also have been there.

Wives of men in SA often live near mother-in-law, to be kept an eye on. Also Nelia now that husband is working in Kasungu.

Women don’t seem real victims in money-relationship situation: demand! Like girl in letter to Davie.

Difference between now and when maize cobs will have sufficiently dried is that even though people are already eating nsima from current harvest, they cannot sell their maize yet...

Passing Ada and visiting Dora to buy tomatoes after 11AM, both asked whether we would not stay for lunch. Tumanene was eating pumpkin with kids (with hands) and had plate of cooked maize cobs waiting for them. Offered us the maize cobs. Always when eating & meeting people, even if they just pass by: “karibu!” but always declined by everyone. Only very rarely, eg Innocent accepted some pumpkin (when we were first to eat, and we really had too much).

Dora said by herself that she is busy finding money these days through her tomato yield (this harvest will last till end March, then next will take her from April to May, also at dimba). Sell to people in village in small bits, but also goes to [nearest tradingcenter] to sell to vendors who sell in Balaka. Does not go to [small crossroads market] to sell, because there most people buy at their own friends and relatives, not from strangers like her. At [nearest tradingcenter] people are vendors, don't care about that, just look at quality of tomatoes. Now sells at 5ltr 300 (before 280), 18 ltr was 400 now 600. Prices increased because Ntcheu was first to have tomatoes but are now getting finished. Smaller vendors also come by to buy and sell at e.g. J. village.

At her khonde 2 men, one younger other older. Older one trying to fix a radio. That one is the father of Dorica, said Dora. And later to younger daughter (eating brown sugar from a small blue plastic bag): Have you told these visitors that your father is back? [heb je al verteld...]. Apparently man also came with radio. There was also a bike taxi, probably from the younger man. Young son of D gazing at it, touching etc. D said that husband had said that he wanted to greet us, she had bragged about us coming over ever since Sept last year, buying tomatoes, asking about how things are done in Malawi. Bcoz of these visitors we are now seeing cars in this village! Seemed proud that we came, that she could show off to husband.

Molly not at home (went to buy tomatoes there first) --> to church. Grace not to church because child ill, just at home reading bible.

Livia told Gertrude this morning that she had gone to see boyfriend on Wednesday and asked him whether he would go to visit her parents. Ah, not yet, will tell you when I'm ready... And Livia will indeed wait for him to tell her he is ready, continue to see him and not tell parents anything yet.

At borehole women spoke about a very young girl from here, born 1997, who is just moving around with men trying to find money, up to Thyolo. These days she is going to the newly opened bottle store together with Doris. “Afa atisiya.” = this young girl will die while we are still alive.

Chief Mudzi B and Tumanene drying leaves and there. We gave Tumanene the new phone face she had requested, but she is not able to pay now. Is not even using her phone because can’t pay for charging. Next month husband will send money again, very sorry, but many thanks. Looking inside house Gertrude saw decorations on chairs and tables and asked to see. Both 1 knitted decoration at 30MK at [nearest tradingcenter] recently, she said. Table and 2 chairs, plastic golden look big watch as clock, another clock, some posters/calendars.
Monday March 2, 2009

Livia came by in early morning to have the decoration that she is closhing checked and say that she is going to her tailoring course today. She is not sure whether they will be receiving their sewing machine today.

Gertrude went to fetch water with Innocent, who told her that Livia and Phingi went to K. village to meet the man who proposed Innocent for the third time now. Innocent went to visit Livia has now accepted his proposal, but came to discuss with Innocent in evening that she also has a boyfriend in Balaka, who she likes better (but he was not prepared to meet her parents yet, maybe therefore opts for the safer option now?). this man, a relative of Phingi's friend in K. village, was declined by Livia's brother because he already has a wife somewhere else. Maybe Phingi wants to please her friend by stimulating the marriage anyway, she really seems to want Livia to get married, worrying about who will take care of her when Phingi would die. Livia's father just kept quite about the whole issue, Livia doesn't find this man attractive.

Chikondi came by with one of the twins on her back and a chitini of water on her head. One of her sons with the other baby on his back and a bundle of firewood on head and the other boy with a chitini of water on head too.

Magda and Kima came to greet when coming back from maize field of the church, where they cleared the field from weeds to make harvesting easier. Magda said she will come get me one day to teach me how to pound maize in a mtondo. She [Magda] is still eating from their own harvest from last year. Always works hard in the field, so that now she doesn't have to pick maize prematurely and dry it in the sun, sleeping without food if there is no sun for a day.

Julia and husband were kutonola a large dengu of hybrid maize that was not dry yet, to at least have something to eat. Ndinatonola 1 bag maize cob = full plate of kernels, but will only be enough for some phala for a child. husband of Dora was visiting them, I asked why not men from Mudzi A have gone to SA, while in Mudzi B many, answered that for him, he wants to go just hasn't found means to pay for passport (8000mk) and transport (13000mk). When they sell cotton, they just use that money to buy clothes, ziwiya. For those with relatives there it is easier, the relative can send money to undertake the trip. In Mangochi people just say: here is money to go, once you are there send me back the money. If he would go, he would just be staying with one of the men from Mudzi B. Tell in advance that he is coming so that they can be looking for a job for him. They said they were happy we visited them, in stead of only just greeting when passing by.
Went to Venesi to ask her to keep track of the things she finds/receives and spends. On way Vanessa came running to have her knitwork looked by Gertrude. Venesi is willing to keep track, Gertrude checked out the cellphone that Venesi had hanging around her neck: a new 1110 (same as Tumanene has), which made Gertrude conclude that is probably indeed sent from SA. If it would have been an old phone it may have come from boyfriend, but the Nokia 1110 is the type that husbands often send to their wives from SA.

Sofia was peeling fresh g/nuts to cook like beans for ndiwo. GVH gave her the g/nuts, all children sitting around her, helping to peel and eat.

Also Chikondi and Suset were willing to keep track of incomings and expenditure. Venesi has 50mk at the moment, Chikondi 30 and Suset nothing. I also want to ask Evelin, but she was not at home, choose these women because they have relatively far in school, and have an interesting financial situation = no steady income provided by a husband like eg women with husbands in SA.

Asked Magda how she managed to send her first husband away. Indeed he refused several times, then he got sent to prison and while he was gone she married her current husband and was pregnant when the first one came back, he took her to court where she cheated that she had gotten pregnant by somebody who had just been moving around without getting married. She said in court that she was willing to go back to her first husband, knowing that he would not accept her anyway. Meanwhile her parents hid her second husband. Eventually the court decided that she had to pay 20,000mk as penalty for causing the marriage to end by becoming pregnant from another man. Her second = current husband paid the fine, which the first husband just used to drink beer, “nothing to remember” = tangible. That man married 5 times but is alone now, while she is still with the second husband. She did wrong, she says, but is happy now. Wanted to make us chimanga chootch, which we declined, in morning had joked that she wanted tea when she sat down to greet us. When passing by Balakasi, Naima and husband clearing their cotton field, Naima joked that we should hurry home and start prepare lunch for her. Gertrude joked back that she will be using a chitini to cook in instead of a pot.

Magda thinks people can harvest by end of March, and that cotton harvest will also start earlier this year, by early May. The maize near Suset’s house is ready bending down, it’s hybrid, and she will be harvesting them one of these days because they are dry enough. So the first harvesting of properly dried maize will at least start soon! Looked into her [Suset] sleeping room and saw quite a lot of items, including an upside down plastic box as table with laid out on it some items for in hair. When we arrived she was sitting with Kima and another woman in front of Kima’s kitchen, who is brewing beer again today.

Aisha asked for another picture because the one I gave her has been damaged by heavy
rains. She was feeding her goats that are tied.

Venesi also been weeding at the field of the catholic church at [tiny crossroads market]. All catholics have been helping to cultivate the small plot. Harvest is used to feed visitors or buy items needed at the church.

Men - or at least those in SA - have the power to prescribe their wives where to live (near the husbands relatives).

Saiba passed by coming back from [tiny crossroads market] where she has been selling guaves. Had bought a full dengu, now only a layer on bottom left. Selling at 2mk for the smaller ones and 3mk for bigger ones. Baby on back and other child with bowl of fresh fish for ndiwo now.

At borehole Rosa daughter of [Bicycle maker] told Gertrude to stop knitting her jersey because she doesn't have the money for it now.

Jasmine came to chat with dengu lit full of msewula to peel for her ndiwo today while chatting. Complained about CUMO: already working with them for 5 yrs, and now this. Even not getting back their savings money. Why don't you go to office in Balaka to complain, I asked? Will wait a bit more, mangizi says he will arrange, otherwise will go indeed.

Daughter of Rashida came to pay for the chipewa she ordered for her baby, the third chipewa already. Wants to go to secondary school after writing primary examinations, and then to college to become a lawyer. She hears (about) them on radio and decided she wants that too.

Many women knitting again: Ada came again, and messed up again. Grace with daughter ill with malaria, crying loud when having attacks (will go to Banja la Mtsogolo mawa, at [nearest tradingcenter] and [clinic] don't give enough medication, will have to pay at BLM, but at least gets proper dosis). Blessings, leaving twice to collect money for zitenje that she sold. Had kept some behind for women who had told her so, wanting to buy after selling cotton. But now others asked for them (had spread word through in-laws at [large commercial estate] etc), so she wasn't going to keep them, not being sure the others will indeed buy. Kondwani was quiet today, Haliday came again too, quiet too, learning to close a small bag for her mobile phone, will pay Gertrude for the thread she used for it. Vanessa was laughed at for having been seen knitting in morning at house alone, “making mistakes” (because without teacher). Answered she enjoyed it when nothing else to do. Chisoni said she wants to buy a basketkastje (120-130, passing by vendors at J. village/chigayo) and thread. Haliday said: to prepare for your husband's home coming, haha. Maybe this time she will get pregnant, so it's good to learn to knit. Ah, don't worry, your husband will bring everything for you from SA, Blessings said. But will be knitting anyway, to make different patterns, the way I like it. Then Grace said: Mwina sizidzatheka, adzalephera: But maybe you will fail to give birth and then he will have brought all those things for nothing/she will have to sell all the baby things she knitted. Laughing. All were now joking about importance of making a “budget” (using English word) with money from SA so as to have a nicely changed house when husband comes back.

Grace said she harvested 3 bags of maize last year and is about to finish eating them, will then start buying, but at least maize will be cheap again. Jasmine joked to Grace that she must have been sleeping with another man, because her child is ill.

Women told Ada that they had seen her with the father of her baby going into Pamela's
house several times: Beware, he will give you another baby! His other marriage has ended now, they said. Why do you still keep his name [as last name] for your child, should change it into name of your own father to show that you are angry with him!:

1819
1820 Blessings: Jones akumabwera... [Jones (father of Ada’s child) came again...]
1821 Kondwani: Akumafikira kwa amayi a Victor (= Pamela)...  
1822 Chisoni: Banja lake lavuta, chifukwa chake akumabwera kwa iyeyo.
1823 Kondwani: Banja lake latha?
1824 Ada: Iyeyo?
1825 Blessings: Mnyamatayo ali ndi matenda.[That boy has diseases/AIDS]
1826 Kondwani: Lucy, ukatengeka upita... [if you will be attracted to him, you will die]
1827 Blessings: Amachoker kuti?
1828 Ada: Kwa M.
1829 Kondwani: Akufuna kusamala mwana wake. [He wants to take care of his child]
1830 Ada: Ali ndi mwana? Alibe! Mwana ndi wanga. Panopa akukhala ndi ndani mwanayo? [Does he have a child? He does not! That child is mine. With whom does the child live?]
1831 Others: We are just saying this because the child still has his name...
1832
1833 Today also Tinenenji joined again - yesterday playing net ball. Dorica only came by to get the 50MK for the tomatoes we bought earlier from her mother. She had a cellphone around neck too! Says she got it from father. So he is planning to stay, Gertrude concluded later.
1834 Vanessa said she had paid grandson of GVH 30MK for spraying chemicals on her cotton field. Blessings said that was very little money, a soap (“Nirma”) costs 35MK! She should be paying 50MK, would any adult to that ganyu for so little money? Vanessa said she would reconsider.
1835 Women said it is good that others are not coming to learn to knit, so that they will have costumers later.
1836 When I asked the women why was that from Mudzi A no one had gone to SA, while from Mudzi B so many. Difficult question, didn’t really know the answer they said. Could only think of “Chidwi alibe” - there is no interest there of going.
1837 When daughter of Esnart came, women asked her where her mother was. The child answered that her mother was cooking pumpkin which she got from the field. Was laughed at for being so detailed. lli, this one keeps a close eye on her mother! We didn’t ask you what she was doing, only where she is! Conditioned to be unspecific thus...
1838 Lovely passed by, saying she was too busy today to come knitting. Women joked that she would be punished tomorrow for failing to come, because she will be asking questions because forgotten.
1839 Tinenenji said she had to be going, because she didn’t have ndiwo, so had to go and find. Kondwani asked her why she didn’t just cook some pumpkin for dinner. Tinenenji answered: Nthawi inonso kudya maungu zinali kale, pano tikudya nsima, sitingagone ndi njala! [the time of eating pumpkin is over, now we eat nsima, we don’t sleep with hunger!] She is eating alone these days (husband left, and apparently not with g’mother/aunt).
1840 Women discussed that both Tumanene and Lovely had stopped breastfeeding their last borns, as these are now old enough (app 2 years). No opinion about it, just mentioned.
1841 Gertrude asked Sofia about Jane, says Jane left saying that she was going to her aunt at [clinic], but family here does not know what she wants to be doing next. I inquired about food, when just dropping yourself at a relatives house. In beginning can be eating what you have brought, after that they will not be so happy, complaining to others about the big responsibility they have of taking care of you too.
1842 Admarc will also be buying maize from farmers. Will announce on radio where, at fair prices (but
because of corrupted Admarc sellers, much maize will not get back to people at fair price...).  

March 3, 2009 Tuesday - clouds, no rain

Women weeding at tree-plantation. Many women washing today (Pamela, Ada, Esnart). Sofia told Gertrude that Livia has now come home with a cellphone, which she says she only borrowed for 2 days. Sewing machines will be given in April., The first machine she got on her own name, but this one on the name of her deceased sister, mother of Davie. The money she will earn through that machine she will give part to her mother, and buying soap for Davie. If she will move to Balaka to marry boyfriend she will either leave machine here, or take it and send money back home.

Paid 2000MK rent to GVH (who we afterwards found clearing around our house, path to bafa etc). Complained about sores and coughing. Gertrude asked her why not to hospital, GVH just answered she is busy preparing for the 40-day ceremony. Already bought a goat with th emoney that her son sent, and plans to also buy a chicken, because doesn't know whether people at M. village will buy food for that ceremony.

Went to Venesi to instruct that she also has to keep records of non-monetary items that she receives and gives. Again Evelin not at home. husband of Hilda on kho nde, as always. Grace’s daughter better again today.

Continued to Sweetness: she stayed with her previous husband at his home village. He said he would change when she complained about his beer drinking behavior. Until at one point she was really fed up and left him in January. Had been working on his field there, but didn't demand part of the harvest, didn't want to make problems. Ate with her parents until new husband, had a lot of maize. Women who say they want to divorce but husband refuses to leave are just not serious. I asked whether her husband (who was now out doing his fish BS, but came back already around 9 - 9.30, when we passed by again) even thought about going to SA. He does, but they don't have the means for him to go. When finishing my questions, Sweetness (pregnant) asked Gertrude how much a full baby outfit costs (chipewa, trousers, jersey and boots), 700MK, wants a set in blue and white, like Haliday got. Drying khobwe leafs.

Christina's husband agreed to end the marriage without any problems, he didn't want her either. So he just left after she said she wanted to stop, didn't take anything. It had been in November, they had already finished their previous harvest, she worked on the field alone after he left. Her current husband has not contacted her ever since he left in Oct (leaving her pregnant). As far as she is concerned they are still married though, because there is now a new rule that divorces have to be made official at GVH by paying the women 20MK and signing - with ankhoswe from both sides present - the book. Verified with GVH, indeed keeps track of birth, death of children and adults, marriages and divorces, since last year, told to do so by government, which supplies the books. When she needs a new book, goes to sub-TA who will write letter to DC. Bcoz husband of Christina has not come back to sign that book, not officially divorced, difficult to marry another because of that, she thinks. Some of her maize cobs are already bending done, still she thinks harvest will be in April. Still 4 weeks from now? Yes...

Walking back I wondered out loud whether Lizzie would prefer her husband to stay or to go back to SA (women knitting said that he has decided to stay and do BS here in Malawi). She will probably just agree with what he decided, Gertrude said. But must have preference in her head, both options must have advantages and disadvantages. Going means she would have more money probably... Gertrude then added: And then she can decided herself on how to spend the money, while if he stays here, will keep the money himself...
Alma with big pumpkins, saying they started eating while ago already. “Njala [hunger] was bad this year, but at least eating pumpkins now.”

Livia came to be instructed on use of phone, which she received yesterday from boyfriend who came to her tailoring course. Use it for time being, he said, I will buy new one later. He says he is now preparing to meet her parents. But Livia is still uncertain about telling her parents. Mother is pressing her to marry the one from K. village, where they went on Saturday. He offered 2000MK: Just accept, I am serious about marrying you. But she refused, doesn’t want him, wants the one from Balaka... Boy from Mudzi B came with phone, boy had been calling from Balaka to speak to Livia, but found her out, then came to Gertrude to talk to him. Boyfriend asked Gertrude to tell Livia to come to his shop tomorrow before tailoring because he bought her the cloth she begged

Wants to cheat mother about cellphone, saying that she exchanged it for 1.5 bag of maize (75kg). Parents will be happy, maybe even helping with the maize, because the cellphone will help them too. So then I can sell that maize and buy what I want.

Went to Jasmine to use mtondo to make nsinjiro [grinded groundnut], found her eating maungu (12am) and cooked maize cobs with Innocent’s son. Husband was also there, but not eating them. Sofia’s children were also eating maungu, but much smaller plate. Sofia again drying leafs, Jasmine drying leafs, thelere and pumpkin.

Jasmine wanted on picture with 2 tied goats, proudly went to show picture to husband. Younger son of Sofia put his hand in the plate with nsinjiro that Gertrude was carrying, and then said, ndaba [I stole!]

Livia already closed a little bag for her phone yesterday. Mother Phingi asked Gertrude about the phone, Gertrude told her she didn’t know where Livia got it (first had said to Phingi: I will answer you later, then discussed with me, I advised her just say not to know). When Livia and Innocent had gone to wash their clothes Livia had said to Innocent that she planned to tell mother that Gertrude had given her the phone. Innocent told Gertrude and then Gertrude told Livia that that was not possible because Gertrude already told Phingi she didn’t know anything about the phone. And advised her again to be open with mother about boyfriend in Balaka. She, however, seems not to want to against her mother’s wish to marry the man from K. village, will go for tailoring again tomorrow, and Phingi told her to bring baby Hana with her because Phingi will be too busy at the pig khola to take care of baby.

Evelin came by to chat in early afternoon. Asked her whether she would be willing to keep records of what she receives and spends/gives per day. Laughing shyly again, but agreed, took a long time thinking about what to write down as last thing received, then wrote that she had borrowed 100mk from grandmother on March 1, Gertrude noticed that the date coincided nicely with someone having received a salary at the end of Feb.
After a while she [Evelin] said she was going because wanted her hair braided by Grace, because going to Balaka tomorrow “to buy paraffin”. While, according to Gertrude, prices of paraffin vendors are the same in Balaka as [small crossroads market], may be ARVs at hospital? Says she is coughing not getting better.

Venesi will also go to Balaka, for a 2 day workshop on making charcoal burners, to be teaching this skill at adult school in Mudzi B. Materials will again be supplied by concern, who decided on the specific skill. For charcoal burners less firewood is needed, women can sell the burners for income generation. I inquired about which organisation paid the tree planters. Is a concern project, but it was a MASAF that came to pay, and the same amount as people received for the other MASAF activities (road maintainance).

Gertrude went to [tiny crossroads market] on bike to get charged phones. Saw only Zione, selling sugarcane this time. Mr Dauda said they will be ordering some decorations from Gertrude soon, already bought chairs earlier, will find a lot of money selling their cotton, he said.

In afternoon we went to Jasmine to burn our clay pots. She had already dug a whole in the soil and covered the bottom with a metal plate. Nkuni on metal plate, then the pots amidst the nkhuni and a lot of dry grass on top. Put fire in it, for about 1,5 hours, while waiting we went with Sofia to find the bark of specific tree which then had to be soaked in water; “mankhwala” after taking the pots out of the fire, the hot pots were slammed with the wet barks, which made the pots to sizzle. Gertrude laughed hard, first when putting the pots in the hole (“just as if I am making sacrifice”) and when slashing the pots with the wet barks (“as if I am a sing’anga!”). Jasmine said she was happy that the pots turned out fine. She used to go very far to find clay, even Eveles had told her that she goes all the way to somewhere near J. village to find clay. But now Jasmine tried a place just behind Livia’s field and found the dothi there to be suitable.

When we arrived at Jasmine’s we found Chikondi with a small paper fold with salt. Julia had bought pannadol and a small blue plastic bag with something dark brown. She said she wants to learn to make clay pots, told Jasmine to take her next time she goes to get dothi, so was serious about it.

March 4, Wednesday

Livia is indeed taking Hana with her to Balaka today. In early morning, 5am, she had gone with Sofia to ask Levison for the 200mk that she gave him for doing ganyu on her field which he never did. He had kept telling her to come back on another day. Now Rosemary [MIL Levison] got angry with Livia, saying she just came to accuse them of stealing, to be fighting. I asked Gertrude whether she knew how Livia had found those 200mk to start with, Gertrude just knew that at that time Livia did some ganyu on Mr Chikombo’s field for 55mk, but he had given her
Yesterday Livia asked a boy to make ridges and plant potatoes for her, because she had 150mk. He agreed but today did not show up.

Rosa passed by on her way to borehole, said she didn’t go to school today because there was an outstanding balance. If she would go, she would be chased. Staying at home will pressure her father to quickly come up with the money, she hopes.

Yesterday Sofia commented on how Livia always has to take ufa, 5 cobs of maize and 10mk for ndiwo to contribute to the lunch at her tailoring course. “And then when she comes home, she wants to eat again, that one!” Livia laughed.

Livia had given Gertrude’s phone number and the number of a son of Elube to her boyfriend in Balaka “because he is single, so won’t give problems with his wife if she talks with him/if he comes to see her because there had been a call”.

Gertrude found ex-husband of Fatima at borehole asking Tinenenji to help him wash his clothes, but she refused, saying she wanted to get home quickly to do something there. Jeneti laughed and asked then: “chibwenzi?” - they just kept quite.

On March 1, the knitting women also discussed various instructive traditional ceremonies, someone told Ada she should attend the “ndakula” ceremony to become more polite, and also to learn about how to take care of baby. Some of these instructive ceremonies are attended before giving birth (to be advised about what happens at birth - the women laughed thinking of how Ada hard cried loudly how much it hurted when she left for hospital to deliver), others after, about how to take care of baby and family. For example that a woman should not put salt in relish when menstruating, because it will cause the husband to get ill. Kondwani, Blessings and Lovely had attended either ndakula, chiputu or litiwo. Costs 100mk, takes a week. Girls stay there the whole week, but those with children just come during the days. Ada was interested and said she would go.

GVH gave plate full of thelere.

When I was not here, both Teleza and Thokozani asked Gertrude whether it is true that I have 3 children. So gossips without truth indeed develop by their own, maybe following from people having seen my pictures, 3 children at home of my parents.

Gertrude tells about Lilongwe, kanengo where she operated a telephone bureau. Many men would come to sell tobacco and propose women, cheating them that they are not married. The women decide to take advantage, “eat the money together”. So many customers for phoning (sometimes 400 or 700mk profit per day), to meet with boyfriends. Some women calling the
Most women went to funeral of one of Chisoni’s relative to [large commercial estate]. Only Grace and Esnart [came to knit?]. They commented on Jeneti who walked by that at least she is getting fat again now because of the ARVs. Some men will even propose to her, looking so good, not knowing that she is infected. It was her brother who had come back from SA some months ago who had advised her to go get tested and take ARVs. Others are afraid to get tested, but it is good to go. Some days ago Jeneti called her brother, saying that she is looking good & fat now.

Grace said that in past people failed to buy ARVs because they were so expensive, but now they are at least free of charge.

GVH also came to chat for a bit, on her way to give Sofia some pumpkins. Yesterday evening she had been to a funeral ceremony of the very old woman that had died at C. village, aged 80 or 90, according to Jasmine.

Gertrude says much more women are coming to knit these days compared to January, when they were busy looking for money for food through ganyu or working on their own fields.

I asked Esnart whether she not missed an available partner at home. Ah, am used to it, but any disadvantages to husband away? That she is living amidst unrelated people, not in her home village but his, which sometimes leads to quarrels and then he is not there to protect her. Gertrude says it is unclear whether she is divorced now or not. He recently sent her 10.000mk (of which GVH was told by son to borrow 4000mk for funeral, which she already paid back to Esnart after her son sent her 12.000mk). Jane said to Gertrude earlier that Esnart had received a cellphone from her husband but soon said that somebody from around her had taken it, while actually she had given it to her mother. Many women with husbands in SA seem to live with their family in-law, why? Are told so by husband.

Livia started her second tailoring course just after her sister had died. Actually the sister had started the classes and after her dead Livia took her place. About 10 women on the course, bit by bit the sewing machines come in, but they don’t want to give until all have arrived, therefore keep postponing.

Woke up in night feeling nausea, in morning had open bowels. Maybe eating too much chimanga chokazinga yesterday, Gertrude says it can give digestion problems...

Thinking of myself and the prospect of being in NL again makes me realize I do the same as many here: splurge - while you know it is not beneficial for future. In their case food & money wise, in my case waist line and facial skin problems... Just the fact of having had to do without for period of time, and then suddenly there is overdaad, and the possibility of getting all you have not able to get
before...


March 5, Thursday

Phingi came in early morning: Livia had not come home yesterday from Balaka. There were rains and grey clouds in afternoon, she could have called to Gertrude using her new cellphone that she opted to stay with her brother in Balaka, eg saying that she had a problem with her bike, anything. Is first time for her to do this since she started the tailoring course, Phingi said. If she is not back by 12, Phingi is going to find her at Balaka.

Evelin was not at home those 2 mornings that we tried to find her, because planting rice at her dimba field.

Two men came on bike with a scale they hung on a branch of a tree in Mudzi B. Women with small children (till age of 5) gathered to have child weighted, results are kept track of in books, most of them covered with a (news)paper to protect. Jasmine said purpose was to keep an eye on whether their children are eating, may be ill. Gertrude and Sofia also went to the “scale” when young. Jasmine not, it started when her children were young. The men informed the women that next Monday they should come to receive more cholera medication. Also told women that they should be washing their children every day. Sofia and daughter-in-law of Dora told the man their child is not getting better. Man advised them to go to Balaka hospital on Monday, will be helped there (even though Sofia has gone there already). Sofia plans to ask Kingsley to take her on Monday, Chikondi gave us the books of her twins to look at.

Sofia came to cut thelere her, because she was just alone at home. Will be drying and eating from June on, also selling. Gertrude said she should just give her youngest son to her ex-husband to take care of him. No, Sofia said, may be he will be going to SA later and send her blankets. husband will pay for ganyu to burn bricks and build the house because he doesn’t know how to do this himself. They will start in June, when all rains have finished and then start building in August.

Girl from [tiny crossroads market] came after some weeks of absence. Gertrude joked that she thought the girl must have gotten married somewhere. But had been ill, she said.

In morning GVH akupalira thonje in husband's field. Tinenenji passed by with khasu, maybe to Mrs Ntawanga's
Went to Mudzi A 2 for some pictures people requested. Asked Sandala about husband’s job at Mpaweni motel, she says he is manager there... Doesn’t know his salary, he just sends some money through others every now and then. Many husbands and wives keep hidden (kubisa) from each other the amount of money they have/get. Otherwise the other one may be begging, demanding too much. Depends on how the couple stays together, “if he likes money too much” women prefer not to tell. Others are open about it. She has told husband about 10.000MK loan she wants to get from CUMO (will receive March 24), because otherwise it will be difficult when she may need his help in paying back the loan... Wants to make both mandasi and bread, try to sell the bread at tea rooms in Mbwera, otherwise at school. Planned to go to [small crossroads market] to learn from some women there how to make bread, but Gertrude told her now she can teach her too. Will send a message when she has found money to buy the ingredients (sent by husband). They have now built a kitchen, with a chicken khola next to it, for future chickens.

Then passed by Saibi who sat in front of her torn down house cleaning nkhwani. Sending first husband away was easy. She said: If you don’t go, I will go - and he preferred not to stay alone in her home village. He didn’t work in the field, arguing that her relatives hated him, seemed to be waiting to be send away. Already had another wife, so was easy for him to go and stay there. After that he married another, but later went back to the second one. And now he is with another again. She [Saibi] had started a cassava BS with money borrowed from mother, then someone took cassava without being able to pay yet, so then she just stayed. Now she went to collect that money and bought a dengu full of guavas, are cheap, just paid 80MK for full dengu. After burning Saibi’s roof, Charity went to marry in Balaka, but the new husband already left her there, she is probably afraid to come home. Used to stay with Selina in house, so nowhere to stay now. Maybe pregnant, Gertrude speculated later, therefore staying there.

Passed by Phingi going into their fields with a basin. Livia had still not returned (almost 10AM). And she is with the child on her back, Phingi worried. She will come, abwera, Gertrude assured Phingi. Gertrude promised to try and call her again, but Livia’s phone is still switched off. Phingi says she will beat her when she comes back. Levison had come to apologize yesterday, saying he will come bring the money as soon as he finds some.

Phingi planted msewula on the plot near her house where they already harvested the maize. Just in case enough rains will still fall. Haven’t had hard rains since Saturday, only some light rains.

Lucia ([tiny crossroads market] vlg) came by when we were having lunch. Just joined us on the mat and chatted. After that stayed to closh until we left for [small crossroads market] at 3 PM. Met her boyfriend when going to [nearest tradingcenter] to sell mandasi there. Had already seen him several times when he spoke to her on road and said he would like to marry her, but that they could start with relationship so she could find out about his behavior. She accepted. App 3-4 months ago. She feels her g’mother bewitched her before she died, something seems to moving in her stomach, a sore inside oid. Had been praying and praying, changed to African Continent church, people (incl Mr Dauda) helped her pray, but to no avail. These people from African Continent told her not to go to sing’anga, but trust in God. But problem persisted. Then boyfriend gave her 300MK to go to traditional doctor, and she is now getting better. She also asked whether it is true that I have 3 kids, which she doubted because she had seen my pictures. “People like gossiping,” she sighted. Today at borehole they had been talking about Fatima’s divorce - had only heard about it today. Were surprised about it, hadn’t expected that marriage to break.
Evelin and Kondwani came by after lunch. Although Evelin had said to us yesterday that she wanted to go to Balaka for paraffin, today she said she had been to the hospital there. Kondwani noticed new dress and sandals for child, but Evelin said she just borrowed those (?).

Went to check [small crossroads market] market, but found it deserted. Only under a tree opposite the market field someone selling 2 hips of second hand clothes, some tomatoes and onions, cucumber and usipa. Met Mr Chikombo, who explained this is a “seasonal” market, so will come to life again in June. Also Kima later that afternoon used the same (English) word to explain why we hadn’t found anything at [small crossroads market]. Mr Chikombo believes people will harvest by end March, another 3 weeks from now. Suset said however that she is worried that her dried maize will start germinating if the rains continue to fall. On way back from [small crossroads market] met with Saibi going that way with dengu full of guavas and children.

Passed by Suset to check on income&expenditure records. She had also listed her activities each day. I should change kupangira/kugulira (advised by Gertrude) back to Kugulira/kupatsira, I think. And ask the women to keep open lines between the days so I/Gertrude can translate. Both Suset and Kima asked Gertrude whether Livia had come back from Balaka, so had already heard about her staying the night there. Teleza hadn’t, apparently, and asked about it when she heard this. She had taken the child this time, therefore she was free to stay there, otherwise baby would have been crying all night, she commented. Gertrude said that Livia had come back and explained that she stayed night with brother who wanted to borrow the bicycle. The women kept quiet, seemed not to believe. Later discussed about a man called Kaliati, whose wife keeps on cheating him that the men he finds with her in the house are just relatives or friends. Haha, the woman with multiple husbands! Also talked about Chikondi, whose husband is often away again, maybe not happy with the big responsibility of a twin. When he goes back to his other wife, he even takes the maize or ufa that is left from what he bought for Chikondi. Teleza said she would throw all the maize or ufa away, so that at least all will go hungry, all will suffer, also the husband and other wife. They don’t understand why she allows him to stay, there is no benefit for her, she will almost be harvesting her own maize. If he stays she will just have to share.

Then passed by Aisha who had begged another picture because other one got damaged by rain. Was surprised that we really came. Took nice pictures of her and kids, also Naima with baby, and later her husband (first putting on jeans, sneakers & T-shirt) wanted on picture. husband wanted Aisha and daughter of Rashida, Monya, to be on picture with him, he leunde on Monya. Gertrude said wife Naima must not have like that, but she just kept quiet. Maybe they are relatives, Gertrude wonders. Balakasi would like to be on a picture with all her family, but then when they have all bathed and dressed up. Gertrude asked why they never came to knit (anymore), no time, they answered (but were just sitting all together chatting when we arrived). But soon she will be pregnant again, said Venesi while hitting her belly which to me already seemed somewhat swollen, and then she will need a baby suit. Balakasi indeed had cellphone around her neck.

Sofia said that Phingi had just been cheating by saying that she would hit Livia when she would finally decided to come home: They were just chatting when Livia came back! Livia came back without phone... Says she spent night with brother who wanted to use the bike. Sofia said to Gertrude that she is happy she isn’t married anymore, that she is growing her own food, gets some money every now and then from grandmother for soap. It’s better to be taking care of one’s children. Not all this hassle that Livia has now, without much benefit.

When we passed Jasmine’s on our way home found there a group pf women waiting to start knitting. Chisoni said she couldn’t start alone, wouldn’t manage - how are they going to solve this once Gertrude will be gone?? They complained they had nothing to do now that we had been gone in the afternoon. Quickly joined us at home: Blessings, Chisoni, Kondwani, Grace, Esnart. Blessings
brought own thread (from something old uit elkaar gehaald) to be knitting a V-jersey zonder mouwen for her son, like the one Gertrude has just knitted which Esnart wants to buy, preparing for cold season: “It’s good to be knitting something big now, to really learn,” Blessings said. The women laughed about Venesi’s boyfriend passing again on his bike towards her house: He is so busy visiting her, “tiona zotsitira zake…” - we will see the results of it, unclear whether they referred to pregnancy or infection... Gertrude is knitting a big poncho for tante Wil, as thanks for all the needles.

1924 Friday, March 6.

GVH anapalira kumunda wa thonje, ndi atsikana angapo, from other vlgs. We had breakfast with pumpkin and popcorn (indeed, the maize we grow does not pop!). Tried to cook with pot I made myself, but took so long that Gertrude decided to switch to metal cooking pot. Bafa is falling apart now, because of rains and wind.

Livia comes back from mosque with Talina, Joy and Hana, all 4 with head scarf. Livia sees Gertrude has knitted a hat for child (ordered by Monya, but not yet paid for) which fits Joy, asks price (100MK) and says she takes it. Will come with money tomorrow after going to Balaka. Relationship still going strong. The boy even committed himself to visiting her parents next week Saturday, Livia has been moving around in Balaka yesterday to find them a house. He had told her rent can be 2000MK, but she found something for 1500, they will start renting it from end March and thus start living together per April. Joy had a nice new dress on. Livia said her brother gave it... Boyfriend of Livia says he will buy her a cellphone soon. She now made clear to Phingi that she does not want to marry the man from B. village, mother “anadandaula” [complained]. Livia said that she told her yesterday about this boy from Balaka. The boy called on Gertrude’s phone and asked Gertrude whether she traveled well yesterday - thinking it was Livia, so she had been with him, not with brother as she said, and the phone was still with him in stead of “left at home, not wanting to take it to mosque”. Says her brother advised her not to marry, isn’t he buying soap for her (ndimakupatsa soap)? But will you also buy me clothes when I want? Said he would. Livia told Gertrude that ex-HB of Sofia wants to divorce new wife and thinks about taking back Sofia “who knows how to take care of the family with little money.” His current wife just takes and spends all his money. I’ve heard this before, Gertrude then commented: Probably because she is a city girl, while Sofia is from the village. I deliberately interfered in conversation to make clear that I understood - kind of - what was being said. And that Gertrude was translating to me.

I asked whether boys here make an effort to have girls enjoy sex. Difficult question to explain, didn’t want to go into orgasm details... Livia said that sometimes a man wants more sex than the woman, sometimes other way around, difficult to solve. Eg Rosemary was married to chief Mudzi A for a year, then he left her, complaining that he was too old to give her all the sex she wanted. Also the current husband left for that reason, according to Livia.

Passed by Venesi to check on HH book. Asked whether it is true that where will be knitting examinations soon. And said it’s good that these women have something to do besides just gossiping. Next Monday adult school will start again. Had been stopped because people complained that they were too hungry to pay attention. Venesi received an instruction book with a wide variety of topics incl soil erosion, livestock keeping, stealing, health, HIV and AIDS, reading & writing, calculating, small scale Bss. She was told to start with just 2 chapters: Livestock and “stealing & murder”. Other schools were told to start with other chapters, later they will meet again and be instructed to start from chapter 1 and work through all of them. She received 2800MK for the 2 day workshop. She wore oorknopjes today, Gertrude says she had indeed written that she had bought these in Balaka after receiving the
workshop money (also children shoes a 500MK, a lot of things).

1931

Evelin was playing bawo with Tinenenji in front of Hilda’s house, Hilda and husband of Amila were watching.

1932

Not all women came to knit today: Innocent, Livia, Lovely, Blessings, Chisoni, Kondwani (but too tired to knit, had been to field to take maize for ufa), Grace, Tumanene, new face. Sofia said to Grace that she saw her with a boy. Grace answered that she has been spending time with him for quite a while, why mention it now? But didn't go into it further, kept it off. Later [Grace] was telling that a friend of the uncle with whom she stayed in Mzuzu had kept calling her “in-law” (alamu) while there, had called her today, talked for 2 hours. He asked her whether she had finished working on her field now, and when she confirmed he told her to come North again and marry him, or otherwise find him a wife. Hadn't known, she said, that he called her alamu because he wanted to marry her! Other women commented that it is good to have a cellphone... [if Grace did not stay with uncle but previous partner in Mzuzu, she at least does try to keep up her story]

1933

Livia wanted to ask Mavuto (g’son GVH) to escort her to field to take groundnuts to take to Balaka tomorrow. Sofia offered to accompany her. When gone Kondwani said: Mtenda akufuna atenge mawa ku Balaka, mwina akufuna akaperi kwa chibwenzi [Those groundnuts she wants to take to Balaka tomorrow, maybe she wants to give it to a boyfriend] (they don’t know about him) chimangonso anapereka koma kulima amalima yekha [she also brought maize (to Balaka) but the farming she did alone...]. Grace added: Mkomya kwa abambo (special treatment, esp nice food prepared to please husband)... Pobwera kumeneko olo 1 Kwacha, ine ayi sindichite... = And then coming back empty handed, not even 1 kwacha, I couldn’t do it. Giving boyfriend, trying to please him with food she cultivated without his help, but not getting back anything (she does seem to get quite a lot, but women don’t know this). Indeed Livia has earlier been taking maize cobs to Balaka.

1934

When Gertrude and I were to Venesi, Grace said to others that Venesi had told her that I asked her to keep track of what she eats, spends, finds...)Gertrude thinks that others will now encourage these women to cheat, saying that if you don’t write this-and-this, you will not get...).

1935

Sofia commented that: Pali anthu ena osauka amadzionetsa ngati olemera, koma olemera amadzionetsa ngati osauka... [People who are poor want to look as if they are rich, but the rich want to look as if they are poor]. About friend of Grace who had moved to Balaka, and pretends to be richer than she is. Sofia also said later that she doesn’t want more children. Grace said: Bola, because you are taking care alone, not like Livia whose mother takes care when she goes off. You have to take all your kids....

1936

Innocent remarked that she had seen a nice skirt in Balaka for 800MK, but no money. Someone else said that in a certain shop nice plates are being sold. Others commented they may check them out once they find money from cotton.

1937

Grace broke a silence by saying that some people are never satisfied with what they have: When they have a bike, they want motorcycle, then car, then airplane.

1938

Women talked about Kingsley and friend, who stopped school in St2 and 4 respectively. They go often, but just to play football. Teacher tried to persuade them to continue, play football after school. Even allowed them to enter in St6 or 7, and just repeat many times so that they don’t have to join the small children. And told them they could even be coming only 2 days a week ipv 5. Gertrude remembered that Kingsley indeed had trouble reading the letter of Doris. But GVH said that he is the one who writes in the divorce etc book...

1939

In evening Sofia comes to borrow torch, wants to run to GVH (“amayi”) to beg some paraffin, because she currently has some. In case Sofia’s son starts crying in night (not getting better).

1940

Went to [nearest tradingcenter], first to hospital to make appointment with Mrs Joshua, nurse, to interview her and try to get some factual data/statistics on number of birth per month.
But she had gone to Balaka, her house (iron sheets, electricity) is right there on the compound. I will call her to make appointment, met Blessings and daughter-in-law of Dora who had gone to hospital with ill kids. But the doctor had been beaten by angry patients yesterday and not shown up today.

At market tomatoes and guavas mainly, also cucumbers, eggplant, onions, dried fish, beans. Only 3 women selling mandasi, no zigumu (because mgiwa difficult to find these days). No masamba or thobwa or chimanga chootcha/chophika. Livia’s ex-husband was frying chips this time in stead of selling fish. The woman of the restaurant had gone to a funeral, a younger woman with baby was sleeping on floor, got up to receive picture. We gave most pictures to the woman selling legumes, she would pass them on. The tomato selling woman outside the market whom we interviewed earlier has been here all throughout hunger season; sindinasiye. Bought her tomatoes somewhere at Ntcheu district, now more and more women are coming to sell their own harvested tomatoes. Coming months BS will be much better than the past months, she said.

March 7, Saturday
GVH is clearing away the cotton under trees in front of our house for us & all women to be chatting there in shade! Cotton isn’t growing well there anyway. After having been complaining so much about people visiting us too much, haha.

March 8, Sunday
Vanessa came later than usual to knit in afternoon. Kondwani said that Vanessa and husband had been fighting, he asked her why she washed her body so properly, whether she was going to meet anyone = man. But Kondwani said that it is unreasonable of him to act so jealous because “their child is still young”, meaning that she would not be able = allowed to be having sex with anyone at all. For ¾ months should refrain from sex. Vanessa just came to knit though, and after a while her husband passed by very angry, says Gertrude. [she remembered this story later, did not write it in her own notes]

March 9 2009, Monday - Lilongwe
Siambi says that it is cheaper for farmers to not grow maize at all, but buy just after harvest! He has been trying to convince ICRISAT employees, but only Chamanga has come to agree with him now.

Meeting at the office with film crew that flew in from Nairobi today. Siambi agreed with Thukwi, but also had 2 other villages selected nearby so the crew can check these out “because you (visionalists) see different things than we (agriculturalists)” which pleased the team. Festus from ICRAF however came in very defensively, sounding angry about the selecting of Salima: “we put in a lot of resources (human, financial)” and thus should be talked to first and be given the lead in deciding on the locations, want to show the team the places where their projects run best. Team remained very diplomatic, but also made clear their intentions are drawing an anthropological image (for the Irish public to feel surrounded, emerged within this 1 village). Siambi fully understood, and even though the Irish Aid, who funds and requested this multimedia project, did not fund any of the ICRISAT activities in Salima, as long as there are groundnuts, any groundnuts, he is fine. Told me later that this is why he had told Richard Jones he was not going to coordinate the film crew's stay here for all the different centres, cause every one of them was surely wanting to show the team their own projects, fighting for precedence of their own. Siambi is leaving for Zim tomorrow - and probably
happy with that, but eating dinner with us tonight. If the team does opt for another village than Thukwi, then Gertrude and I will just head back to Balaka, I guess. Their loss. Don't really feel like going to Thukwi as a matter of fact.

1958

1959

I was ok with taking a minibus to Chitedze, is no problem for me anymore. But No!! If you have the resources available, you have to take the car - in other words, more like “one who has the resources, does not not use them! - with a tone of, how can you even consider anything else! We cannot accept you using minibuses! Gray also remarked that this year will be a bumper harvest, rains have been good. Indeed, I hadn’t realized as such. He asked me how the harvests prospect looked like in Balaka, I didn’t know what to answer, what he wanted to know (quantities of bags oid?) But then Gertrude asked it looked very well, lots of maize - and then I remembered last year driving through Kasungu (or was it 2 years ago, driving back from Vwaza Marsh) that the maize looked very depressing there, completely dead. Gray said that in the south eating maize starts earlier, but hunger also. And that this bumper harvest does not necessarily mean a later start of hunger season. It will lead, esp in South, to more people deciding to perform certain ceremonies like boys circumcision, girls initiation, remembering an uncle who died some years ago and who has not had a tombstone revealed. For all these food=maize is needed, and now that it is available this is a good year to perform these ceremonies, rather than another year when harvests are low.

1960

1961

Stayed at Madidi Lodge. A Malawian (fat) couple was eating there when we checked in at about 4 pm. Gertrude commented about them, noticed them as strange: Are they married (pa banja)? But then, what an expensive thing to do, eating here together, drinking wine. And where are their children then, left then at home? Or are they pa chibwenzi?

1962

March 10, Tuesday Chitedze

1963

1964

Gertrude remembers: Phingi said she had gone to Esnart to borrow money to pay back with maize later, but Esnart had said that she had no money left. Later Esnart told Gertrude that she did have money, but that she knows Phingi is not good in repaying, and therefore refused to give her the money, cheating her that she had none left...

1965

1966

At bus depot in Lilongwe various men and women selling barks and powders and bottles liquids: traditional medicine. By for when one wants someone to fall in love with him or her, when a woman has missed a menstruation, when looking for a job, wanting to find wealth, for BS to go well, make up after a quarrel, have many boys propose to you, to not get ill after sleeping with a menstruating girl, but also when having head or stomach aches. In Kanengo Gertrude had her telephone bureau beside a trad med seller (says there are especially many there, because many women looking for men and many men looking for jobs and women - at that time stopped employing women to select tobacco in different grades, so women can only find employment as cook or washing uniforms etc) and saw him have many customers, both men and women, young and old. One teaspoon cost 20 to 30 MK, sometimes more teaspoons are needed, for period of some weeks. Different instructions: Put in water and wash body with it, put in porridge and eat, or in water and drink. Jasmine gave someone a trad medicine for fever, to put in boiling water and hand covered face above it, to steam.

1967

1968

Dr Monyo came to chat in my office. “No time” to visit Bazale project, “they won’t release me here.” Doesn’t really know what exact project is there, but when hearing that there was only 1 variety he concluded it must be a community seed bank start up. Says that all members must have received 5kg to plant and give back 10kg to community seed bank. But that because of lack of human resources cannot be checked/followed up properly. Nsinjiro cannot have rosette problem.

1969

March 11, Wednesday - Dedza
Marjolein gave me a report from an anthropologist who did a 1 month study for MSF on village health volunteers who should be present in every village. They are trained to notice signs of HIV/AIDS and encourage those people to go get blood tested. I haven't heard about it in Mudzi B! Should check out whether there is a Village Health Committee.

Steve Photographer advises me to read Collapse, by Jared Diamond.

Seeing picture of Aisha, Gertrude remembers that she had put on a shawl (to wrap baby's on back with) under her skirt on the day that they went to receive payment from MASAF. People had laughed about it: trying to look less thin!

Raphael (capacity builder, degree in rural development, major in sociology, employed at [organization], on trip with media team and us as driver): pesticide companies have the money/means to get out there, deliver their message and products to farmers (shops, extension workers), much more so than government. Thus farmers are more likely to receive pro-pesticide messages. About manure (after me telling about my puzzlement about people knowing it works better yet not making it): people say: have to fetch water from far, later have to transport all that manure to my field at 5 km distance etc (will you supply me with a wheel barrow?). Fertilizer is not only mixed with each other but also with sand, to be able to apply to whole field. Then farmers are happy, satisfied that they applied fertilizer to their entire field.

Jonathan Miller (coordinator of media team): Farmer Fields Schools very inspiring! By seeing fungi on crops/seeds through microscope, as part of teaching people about development of diseases etc.

March 15, Sunday: Lilongwe --> Mudzi B

Notes on previous days:

Raphael (driver of [organization]) said that in Kasungu some farmers decided to only grow tobacco, and with the money they find through selling tobacco buy maize when it's cheap. However, this group plus the group of fulltime employed people (like himself, teachers etc) - who also buy all their maize - caused the maize prices to go up. Government is trying to encourage people to not stop growing maize, but make sure they grow at least some for own consumption, to ensure food sec.

Bye bye specialization/moving out of subsistence farming...

One night Gertrude went out with Raphael to eat (others to Pottery, I tired/fed up, wanted to be alone and go to bed early - Gertrude and I shared room). He started talking about women that were after him. Sending him emails, one had transferred 20000MK to his bank account when he had requested to borrow 2000 from her. Another one requested money from him to start a banana BS, wanted 20000, he gave 30000 and agreed that she only had to pay back part of it. They spent night in hotel together, but on separate beds, he said. How his wife refuses to put on the miniskirts and trousers that he would like to see her in, so therefore he likes looking at other women. She is also not very talkative, so he finds nobody to chat with when he goes home, so only goes there to eat and sleep. She is Tumbuka, he was told to pay the price of 2 cows cash, but could take the girl after only paying for 1 = 15000MK. So when they'd divorce he can have the kids. I wondered whether a man is happy with that, maybe difficult to find new wife. Gertrude thinks it's not difficult, especially if woman doesn't have BS or other income. For single woman with kids it is more difficult to find new man, who is willing to take care of other's kids too.

I saw him ask tel nr from girl working at hotel where we stayed in Dedza (Panjira Lodge, where he paid 4800 oid for single, standard room, but maybe refunded by [org]? or per diem?). Gertrude
saw them chatting on veranda after coming back from Pottery restaurant. He gave her 500MK to buy
him a sponge which costs 20-30MK. She can keep the rest, “it’s far to walk to the market” he justified
this to Gertrude - which it’s not, by the way. Gertrude asked him whether he had paid attention to
the costs of her look today: a 1800 skirt, 2000 blouse, 1800 hair extensions. Is that possible with
normal salary for hotel employees? (earning app 10000/month). No, Raphael said, she must have
some people helping her/giving her money. Are you not afraid, you need to take care of your life!
Gertrude advised him. He just laughed, saying he is not afraid, and that it just happens like this.

1990
1991
1992
1993

Gertrude said pitiful that many people in Dedza vlg where media team worked are eating
potatoes 3 times a day these days. Only some people have/can afford maize (have to walk far to get
it). Others not complaining though, happy to at least have potatoes, “in other places people have
nothing…”

1994
1995
1996

Innocent applied for loan from Esnart too, but did not get. While she has her food secured by
mother, still takes loan. Gertrude says just after harvest prices also at 20MK/kg - so actually not
different getting loan now or selling just after harvest.

1997
1998

Chisoni had complained to husband over phone that she wasn’t staying well in Mudzi B/next to
mother-in-law and wants to move to own home vlg at K. Both husband and MIL got angry,
speculating that she may be having a boyfriend and therefore wants to go back to home vlg, to move
around. So it is probably true that MIL sent her young daughter to follow Chisoni where ever she
goes.

2000

At knitting club: Grace had changed from CCAP to mosque when married with man from Mangochi,
but now has started going to CCAP again: “had no one to follow to mosque” - so seem to be divorced
indeed.

2001

Meeting with Susan Watkins on at Catholic Women’s Org in Balaka: she seemed enthusiastic about
my research and some of the anecdotes I told her, making notes every now and then (e.g. of my story
about how Jane had classified groundnuts in as many categories as names she found mentioned in
survey - while some where clearly different spellings of same word, others refer to the same variety
but using different names - I told her this following her shock about the incredible low quality of
research and report writing for Reach org oid that she was asked to consult. She spoke about culture
of report writing, how reports become a cultural artifact (with list of acronyms to start with, even
including HIV and USA), while content itself is based on horribly badly analyzed data.

2003

MDICP data shows that in Balaka 2/3 of first marriages end in divorce. Gave me article
(George something) on stick. MDICP also found that wives of circumcised men are less often HIV
infected (but high divorce and remarriage rate in South undo this advantage). Also shows that 97% of
respondents think that risk of becoming HIV infected after 1 sexual act with HIV positive partner is
high/very likely.

2004

Borrowed me book the Nature of Entrustment: Intimacy, exchange and the sacred in Africa
by Parker Shipton (third of trilogy, third part will be on manipulating external lending initiatives &
options for rural Africans to solve poverty). Told me to read Ch1,2,5 (en ev 6). Also gave me
dissertation she was very enthusiastic about from Nicola Desmond, about risk perceptions in
Tanzania.

2005

Made me realize again that I also really want to include data on development projects, eg
interviews with Concern people (different positions). Won’t have time for that now, I think. But in June or Jan 2010. Susan hopes I will also be writing about what I have seen within ICRISAT (= Jane’s non-analyzing of collected data, people refraining from going into field).

When arriving back in Mudzi B, son of Sofia comes yelling that we have arrived and as soon as he takes a better look at us, starts yelling that I have new shoes (= plastic shoes because of mud everywhere, which I paid too much for but are supposed to cost 200-300MK).

We found GVH, Kondwani, Vanessa and Sofia (and some young and older kids) chatting outside fence of GVH’s compound.

Small plots right of path to Mudzi B tree belong to Sofia: one with groundnuts (not weeded), one with potatoes (weeded). She told Gertrude that her ex-husband has not come to visit when she was ill... Also said that GVH planned to start harvesting tomorrow (= today, Monday). But when Gertrude went to check this morning (Monday march 16), GVH said she had indeed planned too, but now decided to first build a nkhokwe, for which she will have to get materials from far together with g’children. So probably won’t start until next weekend. Jane is back with GVH now. Sofia said that she just said that she decided she doesn’t want to be married now.

Magda already harvested a small plot of maize we saw when passing by. Indeed Ms Mattiya said some people have started now (and all will be harvested by end of April, first maize, then groundnuts, then cotton - sweet potatoes cannot be kept for longer than 2-3 months, so people will just take some when they want to eat, not really harvest).

Monday, March 16: Mudzi B

We harvested our maize, even though it is not fully dried yet. Tatinolono right away and the kernels are now on a mat outside to dry (although clouded...). Would have gone to chigayo tomorrow, but Gertrude suddenly got up because she heard a woman crying. Ran off to check who had died, whether someone here in vlg, or maybe it was just a woman passing through with news from another vlg. Found that is was the daughter-in-law of Dora: Thandizo died in hospital in Balaka last night... We met Tinenenji in Balaka yesterday, who had gone to visit grandmother, saying that she was doing fine.

Already early, around 10 AM an ambulance with a number of women came driving past. Immediately screaming women and quiet men came running from all sides to welcome the deceased. Relatives have emptied half Thandizo’s maize field to cater for the grave diggers and visiting relatives. We wonder whether Tinenenji will inherit the land... The funeral itself will be tomorrow, today not enough time to dig grave and alert more distanced relatives. Now body is being washed, oa by Jasmine - who always helps when the deceased is a Muslim woman. Only older people help to wash. We will not be able to visit Evelin and Venesi to check on their HH boekjes because they live too near to Thandizo's house... Will get Suset's and Chikondi's, translate and check them at home and then decide whether to continue and how much to pay. Gertrude suggested to keep MASAF as guideline = 200MK/day. So 4000-5000/month...

While harvesting both GVH and Jasmine complained we hadn’t informed them we would be harvesting today, then they could have helped. But in reality nobody helps each other, says Gertrude. Only in form of ganyu. The most work in in transporting the heavy maize from field to house. When Hamra passed she asked surprised whether we already had a nkhokwe /whether we shouldn't build a nkhokwe first. No, will just store in house, isn’t much, answered Gertrude. When people want to store it in nkhokwe leave leafs around cob. When storing in bag: take off leafs and kernels.
2019

Although GVH she would be getting materials for nkhokwe today, she went to J. vlg with Sofia to visit relative that is not getting better and afterwards she will go to her rice field at dambo. Maybe sent g’kids to buy material? Although Kingsley came to check whether we found our house in good condition, so her was around.

2020

Daughter of Elube passed by, Gertrude asked whether she wasn’t going to school. No: Zovala zakuda - my clothes are dirty... Just used as an excuse, according to Gertrude, other kids do go to school in dirty clothes. Son of Elube also passed, gave him his picture, where he poses with his mountain bike: I look just like some one from SA! he said pleased.

2021

Gertrude is drying seeds of pumpkin to store for giving to mother to plant next season. In Dedza only very small pumpkins, try if these will grow well there...

2022

Went to fetch HH books and distribute pictures. Met Naima on her way to borehole together with Monya and Nelia. Dora is not selling mandasi at [small crossroads market] anymore, but will go to Balaka mawa to sell bananas. Venesi ordered full baby suit for her last born, saying that she doesn’t want other children so can buy whatever she wants for this last born. At her compound we found Lovely, Balakasi and Aisha preparing chicken in mpika with oil. Balakasi told us to pass by on way back again and receive some thobwa which we did. They didn’t say anything about celebration oid, so Gertrude thinks they just decided themselves to prepare all this. Many children playing around the nice food, but unlikely to receive some, says Gertrude. Maybe their mothers, to distribute themselves. Monya and Dora also came with their water. Lovely is daughter of brother of Balakasi.

2023

Lovely was feeding phala to Naima’s last born with finger, joking that that is the old way of eating phala, now there are spoons... Balakasi says she will start harvesting as soon as son-in-law has made a floor in their nkhokwe, material is already lying there. After he was that hanging around now. After we gave him pictures he brought out his other pictures, not many, all the same, stoere poses, zonnebril, petje achterstevoren, with bike, phone, money. Chenawe came with baby of Chikondi on back, saying that when she was young and giving birth she didn’t have anyone helping her out.

2024

Gertrude complained to Lovely that nobody from Mudzi A comes to chat or knit, L asked why and Gertrude referred her to women around. Balaksi said that we belong to Mudzi B vlg, so difficult for them to come. Chenawe gestured that it will lead to gossips, putting her hand in front of mouth (bijna als luchtkusjes).

2025

Continued to Suset who gave HH book. Kima sitting outside kitchen taking therere leafs from branch for ndiwo, has malaria. Then to Teleza who already yelled from distance that she ate pumpkin today and nkhwani yesterday - so Janneke doesn’t have to ask that! Thought you had stopped moving around asking everybody questions! But was ok in explaining how she [Teleza] had managed to sent her husband away: Ankhoswe had already given up, told them not to come anymore, because husband simply did not change behavior. After year without ankhoswe she decided to turn to church elders, who organized 3 meetings on Sundays with her and husband and advised them, after which husband changed for a while but soon showed same behavior again. At third time Teleza was clear that she wanted a divorce, and both the elders and husband agreed. He did not marry again. She agrees that t is difficult to send husbands away: amakana - they always refuse.

2026

Chikondi says she will start harvesting soon because people already started stealing, according to her to pay back the big debts they made by borrowing either the 1000MK from Esnart or the 1 bag of maize in exchange for 3 at J. village. Had been in hospital for 2 days with babies because coughing and sores in their mouths...
Lovely was preparing chicken today at Balakasi because she was told to do so by a deceased grandparent in a dream. She was told to clear the grave where the agogo is buried and prepare meat with nsima for all relatives to this agogo. Gertrude was told this by Vanessa.

Last week all participants in tree planting project were ordered by chief Mudzi A to help clear the path to [tiny crossroads market] for 3 days, voluntarily. The chief kept calling this; chitukuko.

Evelin went to [tiny crossroads market] school last week to check whether her child really attends classes (she wrote this in her HH book).

Grandson Davie is now back at Jasmine’s.

**Tuesday, March 17**

Sofia spent a night “at the funeral” = probably in one of the houses surroundind Thandizo’s house. Inside, sitting around the dead body, were probably only women like Jasmine, Chenawe, GVH - says Gertrude.

Many women cooking in front of entrance grave yard. When rains came all the women came to shelter in our hose, the whole floor was covered. Many basins were brought in with large mitanda nsima, nandolo and thelere. Gertrude says that the food that these women prepare for the boys who dig the grave (Kingsley, son of Elube etc) is supplied by family of deceased, but the food for the women is supplied by themselves. Some bring ufa, others some money, Gertrude also saw some bringing firewood.

Kondwani, Balakasi, Teleza, Thokozani, Mrs Ntawanga (who seemed to be in charge), Blessings, Elube, Rashida, wife of [Bicycle maker] + others from other villages.

They ate in small groups surrounding 4 sets of basins with the different foods. After finishing they left one by one, then Mrs Ntawanga swept the floor and thanked us. Then Gertrude and I ate lunch (rice, beans, nkhwani) and found we were late to attend the funeral: Gertrude already heard men singing at the graveyard. We hurried to Thandizo’s house where some were crying loud. Sat with Evelin, Molly, Ada, Hamra en Alida. But not for long, but by bit women got up and left. A group including Venesi was cooking nsima in large pot under tree at some distance. Some women stayed for food.

In morning Amila came to chop the chunk of firewood, as she had promised a while ago. Told Gertrude that tomorrow everybody will be clearing the graveyard, and bringing some food to lunch together. She will be preparing thobwa, during funerals muslim women are not
allowed on the graveyard, but tomorrow everybody can enter.

Before funeral we passed by Chikondi (1 baby sleeping on mat, other on back of her her sons) and Suset to give back the note books in which they keep track of income and expenditure. Gertrude and I had been looking through them yesterday, both rather recorded their activities then focusing on transfers, difficult to explain what I exactly want, but we made another effort. Paid them 2000mk and asked if they are willing to continue until June. Chikondi said she will be busy next 2 weeks harvesting, because thieves have alresdy started stealing. But will start again by April 1, Suset says no problem.

Eveles finished weeding her rice field last Wednesday. Is still coughing.

The funeral cooking club complained that the men had requested 8 big plates of nsima while they were not with many.

Kondwani, chief Mudzi B, Jane, Sofia, Blessings, g’daughter of GVH, daughter of Fissa, Lovely, some women from other village (daughter-in-law of GHV), Tumanene (bought thread to make jersey for daughter), some only played bawo. Chief Mudzi B said she doesn’t like knitting so enjoed the bawo. Chisoni didn’t come because ill (malungo), also mVanessa too ill to come. Her husband is now in village, back from his work in Liwonde (catching fish for sale), women said he is back because his wife is not getting better.

Women discussed that one of the coming days GVH will hold 40 day ceremony for deceased husband. They also complained about behaviour of some of them to have been eaten nsima with beans at Thandizo’s funeral today, without contributing. While after 3 days the family will have to feed guests too, and after 40 days too. Some people even kill goats to be able to cater for all the eating guests at the 40th day after funeral.

Jane said that the man she lived with in Balaka had just been playing cards.

Women commented that husband of Dora will leave her again after eating her maize. When Gertrude went to have phone charged at Esnart she found her with some wounds in face; had been fighting, but couldn’t say more. Battery was empty, knitting women said that it was because brother of Esnart’s husband (boy who speaks English) had given ufa from house to friend without discussing with Esnart, but Blessings said this story may not be true.

Women summoned Ada for refusing to marry the father of her child. Lucia said she is still angry for him leaving her when child was 1 month old. Will wait for another man to propose
her, but women agreed, then you will give birth to child with different father, is not good.

March 18, Wednesday

Susan Watkins said that fertility may go down during hunger season because women stop menstruating.

Evelin told us that is was the in-law of Esnart who recently impregnated his girlfriend who took the ufa from her house and beat her when she got angry about it. Also Esnart’s husband used to beat her, one day Gertrude found her with a black eye.

Evelin is daughter of Venesi’s sister.

Venesi gave ndiwo, soap, matches to chief Mudzi B as a thanks for having selected her as a volunteer teacher for concern universal - which brings a lot of income for Venesi (accommodation, transport & food allowances for attending workshops).

Gave Auleria 500mk as contribution to funeral. Folded very small, hidden in hand (when shaking hands as greeting, very secretive).

Livia has not mentioned anything about her boyfriend coming to talk to her parents - which he said he would do on last Saturday. The fact that Gertrude has not heard anything about it from either Livia or Phingi makes her believe that he did not come.

Pedal of Gertrude’s bike broke, went to [Bicycle maker] but he said he would have to charge a lot, because going to Balaka, and are only sold in pairs. Better go to Balaka yourself, he advised.

Gertrude noted that Venesi spends a lot on ndiwo: 100-150 per day in stead of the usual 30-40mk. Probably to accommodate/please her partner who apparently likes dried fish. She sometimes calls him amuna, other times bwenzi in her HH book.

I mentioned tha Auleria does not look very healthy herself either, it seems her face is getting thinner. “may be that is why she not getting married”, speculated Gertrude, “you can see that her youngest child is already in std 6”. Implying that there is no reason for AA not to have married again already.

Thokozani (who ate with funeral group in our house yesterday) said “ndadutsa” for first time again today since theft. Rosemary already started greeting some weeks back (when we met her on road
and I greeted her).

Grace was knitting on her veranda when we passed in the morning. She wanted to learn to knit something big and wanted to see if she can manage without Gertrude’s help. Gertrude gave her thread to be making a trouser for the baby suit ordered by Sweetness. Venesi wants to learn to make V-collar for jerseys, so Gertrude gave her the green jersey she is knitting for Rosa.

Young daughters of Elube pass by from borehole and yell: Apongo (friend), we will come and fetch some water for you! Which they said yesterday to, just a friendly thing to say. Won’t really do it, Gertrude asked why they hadn’t gone to school today: No reason.

We heard an ambulance not far away, soon Jasmine came by, telling that a 3 yr old grandchild of Alma had died in Balaka hospital (coughing, fever, vomiting). Jasmine seemed to blame the mother, who was moving around with men. Indeed Alma herself had complained about this too, telling the girl that she had already lost her sister to this behaviour, should learn from it, see now you lost your child because of it. When Hamra passed from borehole she disapproved of Alma having said this. Everybody knows the girl is an orphan, had nobody to take care of her, had to move around to find support. But Jasmine disagreed: she had a child, so she was an adult. Could just have taken her responsibility and work hard in the field. In stead she copied the behaviour of her deceased sister. Now her only child died, Alma had also encouraged her to work hard in the field, but the girl moved away, renting a house near the lime-factory near Balaka. Lovely came to get her pictures and said that the girl had been complaining at the borehole that her child kept her from moving around, that she had sometimes locked it up alone in the house at night that she considered killing it so that she could be free again. Lovely had then advised her to leave the child to her grandmother or owner of child (= father). The father had married to another because he was working alone in the field, his wife didn’t help: kuthamanga kulima. Funeral will be tomorrow, early, thinks Gertrude because the child was still young.

Charity passes by and comes to chat. Has grown father (her new husband doing BS of frying chips. Ah, muli ndi mwayi, says Gertrude, Charity had been going to [small crossroads market] with friends to be eating chips and was told by the one frying the chips that the owner of the BS (who has people frying chips on 3 places) is looking for a wife. Awetu agreed right away because she fancied living in town. They then met at the same frying place in [small crossroads market] and made arrangements for the marriage. She worked in his grocery shop, but the BS didn’t go very well so she started her own BS of selling matemba. They are renting a house in Balaka, buying everything (tomatoes, masamba). She had planted and fertilized maize here in Mudzi A, which her mother continued to look after when Charity moved to town. But mother told A that she can come and take the maize. A says she is happy to live in town, but when Gertrude asked her at beginning of conversation “zikuyenda”, Charity replied “sizikuyenda” [not going well]. So may be sister Selina was telling truth when she said Charitu had already been left by husband to find for herself. Charity had come with
Jasmine started harvesting her nearly by maize field. Will put hybrid maize in bags and local in nkhokwe.

Sunday May 24, 2009

Arrived Friday morning from the Netherlands in Lilongwe together with my professor Sjaak van der Geest. used Friday to do shopping Gertrude texted long list of terms we need in village: matches, paraffin lamp, paraffin, vice, beans, sugar, cooking oil, salt, eggs, batteries, candles, washing powder, dish wash toilet paper, bike pedal. For my self I wanted 1 extra water (tap water in big bottle), airtime, crackers, a blanket or Gertrude and 1 for Sjaak. Gertrude also requested beans, cabbage and tomatoes which I bought at Lizulu. Beans small bag for 200mk, cabbage 3 for 50mk tomatoes 12 for 200mk, we stayed at Kiboko, Gray took us around. We were just in time to make it to the office, greet some people, and get some things which I stored there. In the evening Monja and Frauke came for a drink, then had dinner with Emily at mamalai's (she craved for pizza on her 1 night in Lilongwe, having been in Balaka boma for over two months). I forgot to go to the typist and tried on Saturday morning but his office was closed. Tried to call, but answered by someone who didn’t speak English, so it can’t have been Davie...... Emily drove us back to Balaka, stopped on our way for a drink at Dedza pottery.

It is not as cold as I expected, only beginning now. Many tobacco trucks at Lilongwe Auction. Gertrude said that she heard that second hand clothes are expensive in Lilongwe because of all the tobacco sales. Prices offered for tobacco by foreign buyers are low, said Gray, and Bingu threatened (again) to deport them if they wouldn’t increase their prices otherwise there would be no benefit for Malawians. On Wednesday Bingu won the elections (billboards everywhere urging people: voterani so there is no Chichewa word for voting...), on Friday he was sworn in. everything went on peacefully.

No news at the office, DR Siambi was in Kenya, DR Monyo in Tanzania with Harvey and S. In Balaka district the cotton looks ready for harvesting. Indeed Gertrude said that at Mudzi B people have been harvesting twice already, although official buying will not start till next Monday. Some have already started selling it to vendors at low prices: 30-35k. Official buying will be done at Holy’s house at 75mk/kg. Emily said she heard that buying got delayed because rain had been falling making cotton heavier.

Went to greet GVH, but she had gone to receive some money that was sent by her son in SA. Went to greet chief Mudzi B who arrived with Vanessa and Kondwani carrying water to throw on dug soil to make clay for bricks for a house that was ordered by a brother of chief Mudzi B and Kondwani who stays in SA. husband of Vanessa was polishing the molded and dried bricks. They receive money for their work but not like salary for ganyu. The brother will think of them because they are his relatives, last time they when they did the same for his previous house that now collapsed, he sent them money for soap as thanks. The men who make the 12000 bricks (oldest son of Dora, son of Elube and husband of Vanessa) earn 5000mk each.

Sjaak said: few people do what you do (living in village). And he again emphasized I should give Gertrude
large role in dissertation. And thus should also ask about her experience of all this.

He asked Gertrude why women in general want to marry. Maybe to have children, was one of Gertrude’s suggestions. And build house, kitchen, toilet for them. But if a woman is finding money through other means, why not pay for labor to build her house or work on her field? She couldn’t really answer (don’t know, we can ask, but you know, you have lived your whole life in this country) then I remembered Victoria, but is a good liar, I said to Sjaak. Is also interesting, lying means she wants to hide something. Well yes but you can’t show which ones are lies. I was thinking about Victoria saying/assuming that she receives no money for volunteering at the adult literacy school, while Venesi later told us all teachers receive 1000mk per month. Sjaak suggested that we just start asking about ‘in general’, then later maybe saying ‘you yourself are a good example for this.”

Alma asked Gertrude whether it is true that Sofia (neighbor) received clothes, money and a phone from her ex-husband, asking Gertrude because she is from Sofia’s village. But Gertrude denied that it is true she had heard the same rumours and went to check with Sofia herself but Sofia said she does receive money for soap and maize every now and then (200mk, 500mk and nothing else). Ex-husband gave money for some bags of maize, in total he wants to for 5 bags of maize 2 for initiation ceremony of their daughter (to make nsima for all visitors as well as thobwa).

In morning an orphaned grandson of GVH was picking some cotton only a bucket full, not as ganyu. He receives orphan care money (once came to borrow Gertrude’s bike to get it and buy clothes with it as his grandmother had told him) GHV said she was going to her dimba field to harvest maize.

Vanessa passed by on her way to Hilda to borrow a chicken, when the chicken has babies she will keep two and return the rest.

Yesterday the pump stopped working. It has been reported at Balaka water board, but today Sunday and Bingu announced that tomorrow will be a public holiday to celebrate his new turn. Formal selling of cotton would start tomorrow but because of this public holiday. So walking long distances to fetch water.

Sjaak says he is surprised about primitiveness had expected a bit more luxury. ‘his’ village (in Ghana) is more like a town. Years ago, when he started, indeed also no electricity or sewage system but now there are even televisions.

I think he finds I am concerned too much with gossiping - discussing all the specific individual stories and actions of the people around us instead of talking with those people about how things are here in general. But I think that all those specific stories can also give me insights in how things are in general, eg when people have opinions about someone else’s actions, a judgement. Nonetheless, it may indeed work well - less threatening, less direct - to talk about how things are in general. For example Victoria. “What are reasons for women to stay single?”

I intend to go in to the formal mode as soon as I ask a question. He makes provocative jokes (such as: Did you beat your husband like that too?). Also impressive: telling off drunk ex-husband of Rosemary after a conversation: hand on shoulder, saying firmly “ok, thanks for conversation” and gesturing with arm that the other can continue in the direction he was heading for.

Went to see men making bricks under Mudzi B tree which I didn’t think was of much interest until Sjaak pointed out that this is what women keep saying: that they need men to do this job for them. Only then did I brought out camera, the young men were putting clay in the moulds and carry them
to a cleared spot at some metres distance, saying that it is an easy job, one doesn’t have to go to school for that, they just did it once and then knew how to do it. But women can’t do it, too heavy, are not strong enough. Is fetching water not heavy too? Ah no, laughing, that is an easier job, clay is a heavier substance than water.

But when we then went to see a pile of burnt bricks at Hilda’s house, Hilda said she can make brick too. Also a door or a bafa she can make, learned by saying attention when husband was doing it. Other women don’t know how to do it (saying they need a man to do this) because they have just never paid attention/wanted closely when a man did it. But building a house she cannot do. I remember now that Rashida also made bricks herself... But mud and sticks house was made by husband.

On the way to chief Mudzi A passed by Hamra’s son who carried big trunks to pile of dried bricks. His wife died a month ago so now he plans to move back to his home village.

Greeted mr Ntawanga to whom Sjaak started to preach about using human manure. Laughing. A man who was with him spoke some English (Sjaak asked:  Are you his brother? Yes, Are you staying together? Yes - I don’t think he understood what was being asked). This man objected that human feces bring diseases. Not if you leave them for 6 months, then they will not smell bad anymore, not look like feces but like black fertile soil. After they also objected that it would smell bad). Sjaak encouraged Mr Ntawanga to compare on the field where we were standing between human and goat manure and fertilizer. Then Mr Ntawanga asked him to sign his visitors book which has mainly FIDP visitors since September last year, not many (I made picture of the book). The goat khola partly collapsed, because FIDP had not come with cement nor iron sheets as they promised. Sjaak was shocked about this when I told him and asked whether Mr Ntawanga was disappointed.

Livia is also building a house - or rather have one built. She sold her maize to pay for the building (besides possible gifts from lovers, like the rasta man who sells beans and who promised to buy cement for her floor. She says she doesn’t like him though, because he has long hair, doesn’t know how to wash himself properly, drinks and smokes. She has been seen chatting to him at Pamela’s house and at her mother’s house when Phingi wasn’t in. Gertrude told me that Livia was proposed marriage via Emra, which Livia accepted without having seen the man. He then sent her fish (has a fish BS), but later she declined the man, saying to Gertrude that she did so because he said he didn’t want to go for blood testing. But Gertrude thinks she just said this because she expected Gertrude to ask about this.

In evening Phingi came by with Joy on back to chat, excusing that she had not come earlier because she had been harvesting cotton from morning to evening because she and husband had been ill for 2 weeks and therefore not harvested earlier. Had sores inside chest. I asked about the scale that I saw hanging at her veranda. Is from her son at J. village who buys maize to keep for selling at hunger season. He gives Phingi money to buy for her and comes to collect the maize every now and then. Today she only bought one bag.

Why do men move to the village of their wives, I asked her kufuna, kufuna, she answered, couples just choose where to live. This son had actually stayed with Phingi until he had his wife had 5 children. Only then did his wife’s uncle order the couple to move to the wife’s home village so that all those children would belong to that village. We are not like Tumbuka, Phingi said, who pay for their wives and then the wife has to move in with the man. This is our law, lamulo, so we can say that the uncle has more power over the wife than her husband? I asked. Phingi confirmed, Gertrude then started to apologize again for the many questions that I am asking.
Hazel is back in office & bored, but finally managed to rent shop. At Bwandiro, sharing with normal clothes seller. Thami blamed her for being an opportunist a week ago, since then not been in touch. She says still with him because of potential pilot show in South Africa, which would be together with him.

With Sjaak discussed about table of content: no place for ethnographic data! Better first description, then analysis. This morning he explicitly discussed research topic with Gertrude: why do women get married, why don't they stay alone? Is it love? No, not really. Then what? Don't know, we can ask. But you know, this is your country! Rather to build house, kitchen, toilet. Can't women do that? Ah, we are lazy,... weak. Men are stronger? Yes. And help in field, Gertrude added. Then he suggested what I had told him, about the threat that married women see in a single woman. Gertrude agreed that the married women are afraid that a single women may be in relationship with their husbands. But don't some women pay for people to build house, work on field? Ah no, want man to do that. Hm ja, so culture, Sjaak concluded. I thought of Victoria at Mudzi A 2, who does good in farming, recently had a new house built. Should talk to her about this! Gertrude told me ontzet that Kkondwani, chief Mudzi B, Vanessa don't have toilet, share a place for kusamba [washing their body]. When maize was in field, went there, but now after harvest bagging friends to use theirs (Kondwani came here one day to use toilet, complaining that she doesn't have toilet, has to beg friends). Sjaak then asked about the male point of view about this, but we said we have little contact with men. Should, he said & I agree. Later discussed with Gertrude that maybe husband of Naima (who I gave pictures - so may be willing to talk (openly). husband of Rose too?

Went to Catholic church sermon at [tiny crossroads market], because Sjaak thought I should at least once attend church and he was interested to do so too. From 9.30 to 12. Nice choir with impressive conductor whom I think is gay. Kima and Magda were there, Evelin with father, Meriam and daughter-in-law. Everybody was pressed to give money several times because next week pentecostal (pinksteren), priest will come for sermon, has to be fed. Over 2000MK was collected. Paintings on wall of a Jesus with black features, older man. Men and women were sitting on separate sides of the church, only the choir was mixed. Gertrude was asked to introduce us, as everybody would be curious (talking) about us... First question from congregation was whether Sjaak and I are couple. Kima thanked me for coming to pray with them.

On way back greeted Alma who was kupeta mapira. I wanted to try too, but after failing (without losing mapira) she quickly took it away again. She showed how she beats the millet plant to get the seeds out (for eating fresh like that, or dry to make thobwa). Sjaak asked whether she beats her husband like that too. Gertrude didn't understand so that Alma answered that she used to do this for him to. Serve him water and a plate with fresh millet seeds. Then I corrected Gertrude, and Alma answered that she didn't beat husband, but husband beat her. With stick? With hands, fists - hitting herself with her fists in her eyes. When husband would be angry he would beat her, when she was angry they would discuss. What made him angry, I asked him. Then suddenly she said that this never happened to her, but to other women. When later Eveles joined us after having harvested some rice (came with grote stevige plastic lap on which she had been beating the rice plants, had left dengu cap with sijs, big spoon for beating and rice at Sweetness's house and asked Gertrude to go get it) she first threatened to beat Sjaak with her stick because he didn't come to visit her first. She asked Gertrude whether it was the same man as had come with me earlier (Feye). Alma had ordered Sjaak to sit at chair, but he refused, saying she should sit their because she is older. But he is guest, she argued back. Then they both sat on mat next to each other, she gave him hands full of millet seeds and showed how to throw them in his mouth at once. Eveles sat down and the two sisters were jokingly aan het kibbelen. Eveles said that Alma should make/give her husband (Sjaak) eggs, as Eveles had done for Feye. And that at least her husband (Feye) had worked on her land, while
Alma's husband was just sitting there. Eveles asked when my husband would come again (for she wants to buy and prepare him Irish potatoes with cooking oil). I told her he sends his regards, but she doesn't believe: I am jealous that he worked on her land, she had asked me to tell him to buy her fertilizer which he didn't, so I hadn't told him. And now I tell her he sends his regards?? Ah, you want to steal him from me! I joked back. Pfff, you gave him to me! In past, if man saw a nice woman he wanted to marry he would go to chief and tell him he wanted to take her a second wife...

I told Gertrude to tell them that Sjaak had said that they should have husbands to take care of them. Where are we going to find husbands? they answered, all older men are dead. Would you want then, aren't you better off alone? Yes, we have children to take care of us. Now if we slaughter a chicken, we can keep it all to ourselves in stead of sharing with husband. So better alone? Yes, better alone!

Monday May 25

Esnart told Gertrude this morning that she received a new cell phone from her husband in SA after having dropped the other one in the toilet by accident (¿). she asked whether Gertrude can escort her to Balaka one day to sign a form to get a passport because she cannot write herself and her husband wants her to come to SA too. But first she has to go to his relatives now to discuss a family issue that she will tell Gertrude about later - probably the condom issue? Wonder if he still wants her to come after finding out about this, but surprising that/if he hasn’t yet.

Dorica refused the proposal she received in March, telling Gertrude that this is because she wants to continue school. Indeed she is still at school, at [tiny crossroads market].

Adult school started but few people showed up. Stopped after about a week. Venesi taught on topics as instructed by concern universal. Lovely complained about this, she just wanted to learn the alphabet and asked Gertrude to teach her during knitting sessions, but never showed up to learn. The teachers still receive their salary though. Women said they were too busy harvesting their maize. Also less women are coming for knitting these days. When Gertrude brought the bawo game many stopped knitting and instead played bawo. After some time took up knitting again, but slowly stopped coming. Only Kondwani, Esnart and Grace (but last one often just comes to show her knitting work to have it checked, may be busy at home with new boyfriend, guesses Gertrude). Tumanene was actively coming, but now moved away after quarrelling and fighting with Jeneti and Ellesi about a plate they accused her of stealing. Also card playing!

Julia passed by shortly yesterday to check on a jersey and pants that Gertrude is knitting for her from an old torn vest. Left to buy some paraffin at 10mk at Jasmine’s - just a small spoon, enough for 1 evening. At [nearest tradingcenter] they sell half a liter for 120mk, at Balaka for 85mk. But she doesn't have that much money. Knows that it is very expensive here, but like this can buy every day for that night. If sometimes they don't have the 10mk, they sleep early in dark, why not save up all those 10mks and buy cheaper at town. But then I am in dark all those nights!

After our breakfast husband of Naima came with a phone that he got from brother of Naima who is in SA - expensive phone, Samsung with camera, costs 10.000mk in Lilongwe, says Gertrude. He wanted Gertrude to explain how to operate it. I made use of this opportunity and asked him about the reasons for men to get married. He said that he was able to do all the HH chores himself, like washing clothes, cooking, pounding maize (he often passes by with his bike to fetch water so he must have done that then too) because he lived alone for 6 years before getting married. He says he wanted to marry to have company in evenings, to have someone to chat to. Had a radio he listened to, but preferred a person... Didn’t want a girl from his village because they grew up together, they wouldn’t respect him. One day he visited his brother who married at Tulipesi and told him he
looked for a wife. Brother then suggested Naima and talked to her. She said that she too was
looking for someone to marry with and a meeting was arranged.

Is it easy to find a chibwenzi? One has to propose various girls to find one, usually they don’t accept
at the first time, so after proposing several you go back to the first and then she may accept, girls
often say at the first time that they have to think about it. Boys don’t bring gifts to try to seduce
them, only after they have accepted. But some boys say they don’t want chibwenzi only marriage
because they may find the disease (kupeza matenda). Do many men (eg those you meet while at
lake for BS) cheat their girl friends and wives? Yes, many do, having more at once. Not afraid of
diseases? They say will die anyway, if they don’t catch the disease they will die of something else.
AIDS has come for human beings, not for animals. If a wild animal comes (chirombo), they have to
say “ndine mwamuna” - I am a man, I am not afraid, also for pregnancy they are not afraid. Always
give some money after having sex, so when a girl comes to complain that she is pregnant the boy can
refer to that money he gave which she could have used to prevent the pregnancy.

How much money is given then? Well for example Dorica was given 50 or 100mk by husband of
Filimona before he married each time they had sex, but later a boy from Mudzi B 2 gave her up to
1500mk sometimes, after which she started to complain about the cheapness of the first one.

Boys feel special when several girls accept at their first proposal, think they are special and then
don’t care anymore about things like AIDS or pregnancy. Do boys find that girls demand a lot? Some
tell exactly what they want, for example they may have seen a certain jersey at market or on a
friend, or they will say they want such-and-such shoes in this-and-this size. Then you either have to
give money or buy it for her. But other girls don’t ask for anything for the first year, but in the end it
is mostly the girls who decide what they want rather than boys to decide what they will give,
Gertrude started to apologize again for all my questions, explaining again that I just want to
understand etc. the boy said he is already a bit used to talk about this topic because at the VCT
counseling they advise about how to avoid pregnancy and HIV. Did he not know that sex can lead to
pregnancy before? Yes, heard from a friend when he was at puber age, he explained to him what
happened at night.

We then went to chief Mudzi A to give traditional Dutch cookies, a plate decorated with Dutch village
scene (farm house, sheep, windmill) and a cup with traditional city houses. GVH had looked at them
elaborately, while Sjaak explained about them. Hamra immediately took the gifts and put them
inside. Two young men had been talking with the chief when we had arrived and were still sitting
near by, may be for that reason.

Chief already harvested part of his cotton, saving all to sell when official buying begins. It has been
announced that the price will be 75mk/kg. Hamra asked if we wanted to see her cotton, but first
wanted to sweep. Then invited us in their house to show a pile of cotton which is approximately 2
bales (5 x 50 kg bag is 1 bale). Didn’t want to estimate how much money she can get for this pile,
and still has a bit left in the field. Will be eating sweets on her way back from selling the cotton!
Most of the money she wants to keep to buy iron sheets for the new house that she plans to build
near her current one. Will keep the old one for the goats that she received from FIDP. She is
sleeping on her veranda these days because inside is full with goats and cotton. Discussed with sons
that they will help her to build her own house, where she will sleep alone.

Her husband has to go, she immediately starts to talk with soft, low voice, saying that he had
harvested 5 bags of maize and already sold 4 without sharing anything. She already discussed with
him that he will indeed leave her. Shows her clothes that are wrapped in a chitenje hanging on wall
- he did not
even buy her any piece of clothes, she doesn’t even have a bag to put her clothes in. When Sjaak enters the house she immediately jokes to the mzungu that he should buy her a bag for her clothes.

The chief doesn’t have plans with his cotton money yet, probably things like ziweto, zovala, ndiwo, paraffin, soap he summed up.

Kondwani later today told Gertrude that already for 4 years chief Mudzi A has been saying that he wants to build a house in Mudzi B. One year they even helped him to make bricks but up till now he has not started building. Gertrude and I wonder what he [Chief Mudzi A] did with the money he found through selling 4 bags of maize (part of which to Gertrude). He doesn’t drink, has no new clothes…. But does always have clean clothes, so at least he buys soap, Gertrude noticed. Don’t even just give dirty clothes to wife to be washed? Yes, but definitely with soap, because if wife brings own soap, husband will ask where she found it.

Continued to Naima to give picture she requested with her and the bikes. were happy we came by to greet. Mother Balakasi came from field to greet us too, with a chitenje wrapped around her in such a way that she could fill it with cotton, Monya (daughter of Rashida) was there too again, Rashida herself came to greet too, carrying her grandchild on the back. Naima + Monya escorted us and promised they would come and chat more. Gertrude said: Amayi a bodza, mumanama! [Mrs Nonsense, you are lying!!] Greeted Chenawe, old woman) who looks much healthier again, apologizing for not having come earlier to greet me, but husband was ill and still is ill.

Sjaak was shocked by baby’s of Chikondi, who are most 6 months old but still very small. But look healthy else wise. He wants to buy her fortified baby milk powder and wanted Gertrude to tell her in presence of the children and Doris… Gertrude was as brief as possible.

Gertrude started buying maize at 25 MK/kg, just like buyers at J. village until a daughter of Alma (who lives in Blantyre married to a driver) started to offer 30mk then Gertrude also raised up her price to 30mk.

Sofia said she dreamt that her grandfather (husband of GVH) told her to make other ceremony and made clothes for her oldest son from his clothe, she told GVH who then took in Sofia’s eldest son (before, her daughter had lived with GVH after a quarrel - Gertrude’s notebook)

Gertrude remembers that her friends/classmates at secondary school in Dedza usually received 300 to 500mk from their boyfriends (after I commented that that 1000mk which husband of Naima says Dorica received seems so much) not every time they had sex but sometimes on Sundays they may come give some money, soap or sugar, chat and leave so not necessary only after sex. Then they sometimes made appointments to meet somewhere. Sometimes another boyfriend would come later and give some money/presents too. The money was to make one self look beautiful to show of to friends that one has many boyfriends.

Only Sofia and Kondwani came to learn it and Sofia left early. They discussed that the ex-wife of Tumanene’s ex-husband came to Mudzi B to answer a call from the man from SA. Her child with this man stays with old Ayama at Mudzi B. They also discussed the following.

-Molly, Tinenenji and Vanessa were the ones to spread the story about the condoms under Esnart’s bed. They were called to Esnart’s house this morning to explain where they heard this story because it is not true.

- husband of Elube went to GVH today to inform her that tomorrow the official buyers of cotton will
- Kingsley (who came to put new pedals on Gertrude’s bike) was asked why his grandmother gave 50mk to his girlfriend instead of himself. “Because I had no money,” he answered

Gertrude remembers that on Saturday, women had commented that Pamela’s boyfriend had told friends that he likes Pamela because she knows various types of sex. The women then said that Evelin had brought a magazine from Mangochi after having lived there with her husband (who was before married to another woman, that is probably they never lived together…) with pictures of different types of sex the boy is very young, the women said otherwise he would not have not have been spreading this. Kondwani said that she had heard about kissing, but never about other sex positions it’s something that “azungu” do, not Malawians. Sjaak points out that Francine wrote a passage in her book about different positions practiced by bar girls.

Kondwani and Sofia discussed while knitting (Gertrude remembered topics by putting them in cellphone):

Parents that want their kids to be initiated this year will all contribute food to provide a meal where everybody can eat, both before and after the initiation.

When ex-husband of Fatima passed by Kondwani told Gertrude (Sofia had left) that her sister is now in relationship with him. She had come here to help GVH with 40 day ceremony after husband died, stayed for a week, helped harvesting etc. When she went back to her vlg he escorted her and still goes there. With Tinenenji, he just made her pregnant, is not taking care of her.

Grace’s boyfriend (who is married to another) passed by in direction of Grace. Kingsley commented to knitting women that he will not find her at home because she now works at the (mandasi) shop at [small crossroads market]. The women then said that the owner of that shop likes women, escorts the ones that work at his shop home after evening and that Grace will definitely be in relationship with him. The current boyfriend often spends the night at Grace’s even though he is married. Kondwani wondered how he cheats his wife, what he tells her the next morning. Then related of her brother who sometimes spent a night with other women and told he cheated his wife by telling her that there had been hyena’s so he couldn’t move home. The wife had believed him, warning others that there have been hyena’s around. Maybe Livia’s boyfriend will buy something for his wife in the morning after having stayed the night away, to please her, so she won’t ask questions.

Son of Venesi sent a cellphone to his girlfriend and 3000MK (had before sent 2000MK, so total 5000MK now). They compared this to Chisoni’s husband, who left for SA earlier, but has not sent a cellphone yet. Only some money twice, and only in the beginning. Lovely had earlier said once that he doesn’t really like Chisoni, who is his senior.

Modesta (daughter of Auleria, daughter of Thandizo) passed by with boyfriend (son of Fissa). Kondwani commented that she only does that now that grandmother died, who would not have been happy to see this behavior. Doesn’t listen to her mother. Kondwani finds that she should work hard in school. Grandson of GVH started to wear his grandfather’s clothes without GVH telling him he could. GVH then asked Sofia to talk to him about it because he wouldn’t listen to her.

Kondwani wants to sell her cotton tomorrow. Gertrude then asked her (like I am asking people all the time too) what she plans to do with the money. Start BS, first of sugarcane, then cassava when it becomes available, and tomatoes.

One of the little boys that was hanging around the house is son of Florence, said Kondwani. She had him when she was young, impregnated by son of Elube who stays in SA. He is not taking care of this son. Often is not washed, compared to the other younger son of Florence and her current husband. One day Florence had been criticizing single women at borehole for not being able to keep their husbands from running away. While the same had happened to herself too.

Gertrude commented about girls from her boarding school in Dedza and girls in general that they usually first
try to find out whether a boy that proposed to them is doing a BS or having a job, can provide. So that they will not end up sleeping with someone who won’t be able to give them anything for it...

Sjaak commented that it is noteworthy that men sleep with women at women’s house (like Emra and Tinenenji and Pamela being caught red handed with other man at their own house). In Ghana women visit the men at night.

May 26, Tuesday

Gertrude bought 9 bags of maize (at 1200-1300 per bag) and 1 bag of groundnuts. Will need app 4 bags for own food, and plans to sell 5 when prices are high (about 3500). Bought the maize bit by bit from people from these villages who came to offer it to her. To buy food, clothes, even hair chemicals (Vanessa).

GVH came to greet, hardly slept because body aches after harvesting rice for long hours previous days. Is now finished, harvested 4 bags. I asked her whether people will come today to buy cotton. Hmm, we’ll see if they come. She said that today Kingsley and husband of Vanessa will try to fix pump (typical - were too busy making their bricks yesterday to do that, the women had to walk very far to fetch water for their HHs and the bricks).

Grace came by, nicely dressed, on bike. Gertrude asked where she was going: [small crossroads market]. To do what? To the shop. Is it yours or are you working there? I bought it - but then laughed, and said she is just working there. Do you still continue knitting? Yes, will still continue and come by with it to show.

Gertrude drying pumpkin seeds to give to mother to plant and share with other relatives.

Ok, I followed Sjaak’s advise to openly discuss research question with others, started with Gertrude. Asked Gertrude her opinion about whether projects that aim to improve rural women's livelihoods can help to prevent HIV. I had to explain more, make more practical, so I gave examples of loans to start BS’s and increase maize harvests oid. Businesses will only lead to more HIV, she thinks, as it brings people to places where many people gather, so there they will be proposed by many. Has experienced this herself when running the telephone bureau. Many men come to propose. First leave 100 MK for a call that cost 50 MK, next day come to propose. Another may even give 500MK for a 100MK phone call. So you (the seller) can compare, and see that you can get a lot of money through these men. But giving maize is better, because eventually it is all about food. Food is the biggest problem. People speak about food, shelter and clothing as important to human beings, but she thinks food is most important. (later adds that women here had once been comparing between the last two, saying that one can live with few clothes, but a house is very important). About condoms, they were told at Church Youth gatherings that they were only afraid to get pregnant and therefore went for injections, not fearing HIV, while condoms can protect for both. But here in vlg Gertrude has seen that people are not afraid of both - or at least not trying to avoid either.

So, didn’t really get an answer that is useful, unfortunately.
The girl that worked at the shop at [small crossroads market] where Grace started working yesterday has been hired to buy cotton that is why the job became vacant. Kondwani and Sofia are convinced that Grace will be in a relationship. And enough to prove that he likes women. Grace is also known to like men and from this she will think she can receive a lot besides her salary.

Langmwale from concern universal was at [tiny crossroads market] to teach people to make mud stoves to save firewood and heard there that I had to come back so I decided to visit. He says they will spread the project throughout all villages before end of this year and invited us to come and visit [tiny crossroads market]. Will be there till Saturday. Only current project in Mudzi B is the tree nursery: some trees for firewood, others for replanting in their own fields to improve soil fertility. When Sjaak asked whether he was satisfied with the current state of the tree field, he confirmed. Another tree nursery will follow. Whenever Gertrude translated charcoal burner she meant this mud stove. Venesi has also learned to make these too. Langmwale said the adult school has not started yet (maybe the one week was just a pilot for the topics?) Sjaak asked him about boreholes, concern universal has the equipment but at Dedza. Balaka Water Board (government) does not. Costs about 800,000-900,000mk to make 1 borehole including searching for a good spot, has to be at least 70 meters deep to not dry up in a dry season why? why? I sense you are interested in making a borehole at Mudzi A? He sensed it right away. maybe therefore says lies that only concern universal has the equipment. Takes 1-2 months to make a borehole. Langmwale passed by the broken borehole at Ngwira and saw people try to fix boreholes who, he says, have been trained by the government to fix boreholes. When we went to check it out we found a group of men and women who told us they failed to fix because a part had to be replaced. I asked who were the ones trained by the government and they reluctantly/vaguely answered ex-husband of Fatima and Venesi was indeed the one who had spoken to us about being able to fix the pump etc, not one of the boys or men. Ex-husband of Fatima now left in trunk of ICRISAT car that came to pick up Sjaak (and 7 of Gertrude’s bags of maize), to buy a spare part at Balaka.
Walking towards the borehole, Gertrude had commented on the field of Emra that she had done all the work on her field alone and now after harvest got a new partner, who is just eating all her harvest. Criticism.

Sjaak remarked that my questions come across too curious sometimes, but I realize now that may have been a somewhat unconscious strategy. To make clear that I as a person am personally interested in them as individual person. So not uncaringly gathering data for an upcoming project.

Mother of chief Mudzi B came to see who was leaving when she heard a car. Said she knows Lilongwe, lived there with her first husband. Enjoyed it, went everywhere where Kamuzu Banda went, to sing and dance, in those days she was still strong. But husband had too many girlfriends, sometimes even brought them home. Therefore she decided to divorce him after 2 children and came back to Mudzi B. Here she remarried with father of chief Mudzi B, Kondwani and son who is in SA and is now having a house built to replace the big one that collapsed, where this old women used to live in. She had tried to advise her first husband to change his behaviour, but he didn’t. Some other women try to use traditional medicine, but she didn’t, doesn’t know why she didn’t.

Soon after the car left with Sjaak, Esnart called Gertrude (“so she has airtime” immediately commented) to check if he had gone because she felt ashamed to come while he was still here.

Women at borehole asked Gertrude whether I had come back to ask more questions. No, assured Gertrude, just to witness the selling of the harvest.

Gertrude says that she thinks that husband of Naima would not have talked as freely if there had been a voice recorder.

Sjaak gave Gertrude 50 Euro’s. As soon as she left she showed me the bill and was of course very happy when I told her it’s the equivalent of 10.000 MK. She was also happy to see money from the Netherlands.

Sjaak secretly told her some things. Possibly that she should not hesitate to tell me when one of my questions is too rude etc. And for sure that I feel lonely sometimes - this I overheard him say. Maybe encouraging her to ask more questions about my world.

Sofia, chief Mudzi B and Gertrude went to the pump at [tiny crossroads market]. Grandson of GVH offered to help with bite, so Gertrude borrowed extra bucket from GVH. There she met a daughter in law of GVH from other village who complained about Livia having borrowed 1000 MK form her which she would repay with a bag of maize but still didn’t. Said they went to a china shop that same day in Balaka.
where Livia bought a skirt and shoes! May those have been the shoes and skirt that she told us
to have received lover? [or maybe cheated to this woman that she bought?] The two women are
in tailoring course. DIL of GVH says she will just keep the tailoring machine when they will
receive these until Livia gives her the money or maize. Sofia says Livia has only two bags of maize
left. GVH said she would go to Phingi who probably does not know about all this to solve the issue.

Gertrude remembers that Livia sold over 1.5 bag of maize to her. First one for 1.250 MK, later half a
bag for 650 or 700, later 9kg for 100 MK. Livia had to give back 1 bag to GVH and 1 to Esnart after
having received 1000 MK from then before harvesting. Also sold 1 bag to her brother from J. village
only for 1000 MK. And some more secret selling here and there. GVH wondered how what Livia did
with all that money. “It is not that we see her or her children in nice new clothes”. Livia paid 1500mk
to build house, Gertrude says Livia likes to buy chips and mandasi, hair chemicals and once hair
extensions once saw her with bottle of body lotion, asked Gertrude to buy underwear for her for 200
MK in town, abortion coated 500mk.

On way to borehole at [tiny crossroads market] chief Mudzi B said that at night thief entered our
house (last Saturday) trying to steal bike, someone had tried to steal maize at Chikondi and two
blankets were stolen at an old woman in another village. Also stole 2 chickens and maize at Magda.
at night before a rabbit was stolen from son of Fissa. Selling of masamba from dambo has now
started. Chief Mudzi B had bought for 10 MK for dinner tonight.

They passed a man with a bag of cotton who told them he had just harvested it. And that “China”
offers 90mk/kg. Empty bales have now been dropped at selling points at Mzenieza (near XXXX) and
[nearest tradingcenter] , so buying will start soon.

Mother of chief Mudzi B was not able to harvest all her maize. Just small bits everyday. Her
children did not help so that children who went around looking for left behind cobs went to empty
her field.

Sjaak does not seem to be bothered by fact that someone else is doing all HH chores.

Ellesi came to tell that husband of Ainessi had come some days ago to spend a night at his mother-in-
law Rosemary. He came with some pots and plates for sale, which she says were stolen from a shop
in the village where he stays now. Maybe he is the thief that stole from various houses last week.
Gertrude asked Ellesi whether it is true that she had been proposed marriage through cell phone.
The man had found Ellesi via husband of Lovely. She accepted and he sent money for school fees.
Annie was very happy, telling everybody that her son-in-law from South Africa would come. But
when he came, Ellesi found out that he is married in Balaka, where he is staying now. Then she told
him she doesn’t want to marry. She waited a whole day for him to come, didn’t go to school, but he
didn’t show up. I asked Gertrude whether Ellesi will now be expected to pay back the money, but
she thinks definitely not. “It will be like revenge, because he said he wasn’t married but he was and
he said he would come on a certain day but he didn’t.

Jane came by in dark, around 6 pm, with friend whose child died just before I left for the Netherlands
in March (who has started moving around with boys again, people say, in Balaka). They had come
from Balaka. Jane had been with parents at J. village for some days after her father came back from
the hospital. Yesterday she went back to her partner in Balaka, but heard from his mother that a
certain girl had spent the night with him. The mother was not happy, saying that the girl is a
prostitute who likes to drink beer and come there drunk. Jane and her friend wanted to beat this girl,
but were advised by others to sit down and discuss, and have the boy decide with
whom he wants to marry. He chose Jane. Jane then pretended to leave but together with friend hid near Mlambe Lodge to see what husband would be doing. They saw the girl come back to him and he was happy. He promised he will come to her parents and arrange marriage, and he gave her 500 MK for transport to home village. She decided it is better not to stay with him in Balaka now but come to home village so that he will move quicker to arrange their engagement.

GVH had been encouraging her to marry a boy that sells veggies and proposed to her bringing a lot of vegetables, fish and small package of cooking oil, two or three times. But Jane doesn’t want to work in the field, wants to marry someone from town.

May 27 Wednesday

Sjaak had started to explain something about Caribbean, and then asked Gertrude whether she knew them, no. Near Cuba, Haiti, Dominion Republic, Mexico, South America. No, doesn’t know. Knows : Malawi, Zambia, South Africa, Kenya, Nairobi, Dar Salaam, Netherlands, Zimbabwe, United States, America (is it the same?), Italy, Germany, Swaziland. I add Botswana. Yes, saw map of world in school. Uganda, India, Tanzania and China.

Reading in Gertrude’s diary (March 25) about son of Venesi saying that wives with husbands in South Africa lack sex, so he moved around finding women who wanted sex. Spent nights at wife of owner of our house, but people didn’t belief him. Then he took his friend to hide in the kitchen while he knocked the door. The proof was that he was let in the kitchen while he knocked the door. The proof was that he was let in the house by the woman. I asked Gertrude whether such boyfriends will give money, since what these women lack is sex rather than money. Yes, definitely gives money, because that is what women expect from boyfriends. He gives to please her, and to make her sleep with him again next time when he wants, thinking that she may get more money. Like Desi who had her own BS (telephone burro) but still complained that her new boyfriend slept with her without even giving her money for soap.

When I inquired whether women may also have sex just to enjoy it, Gertrude first says that it is mostly to find the things that the women want. But some enjoy it too. For example Desi enjoyed it too, because she started at a young age, at boarding school. With a police man who gave her a lot. When they met she always came back with a bag full of bread and other things she liked, he had taken her in Lilongwe. Then they used a condom because the man said they had not seen each other for a year, maybe she had been moving around and could infect him. At boarding school Desi also had another boyfriend who gave her very little money, whom she thus really liked. And since she already received money and gifts from the police man she could manage a boyfriend who couldn’t give her much. This one made her pregnant; of course she tried to abort because he didn’t take care of her, preferred playing football over looking for money, so she didn’t want to marry him. But failed to abort. Later got pregnant from another man too, then didn’t want to abort because then he would definitely not marry her, while if she would keep his child at least maybe he would. Since she already had another child it would be difficult to find someone who wanted to marry her.

One day she had a fight with one of her boyfriends and came home crying. Didn’t speak for some days with each other. She flashed him, but he didn’t call back. Then she decided to go to his house and sleep with him so that he wouldn’t be angry with her anymore. If she would stay away much longer he would start looking for other women, if she would spend one night away other women may come to sleep with him. So I think she likes sex, Gertrude concludes, because she could have thought of other ways to please him.
Another reason why women with husbands in South Africa may still have boyfriends is that they just don’t receive enough money from their husband, says Gertrude. For example, daughter-in-law of GVH complained to Gertrude that her husband did not send enough. They have 6 children and he had only sent her 3000 MK 3 months ago, is not enough. So she came to Gertrude to flash her husband to ask for more. “And if I start relationships with other men to find enough money, he will get angry, because they will not accept to just give me money; I will have to sleep with them.”

Another daughter-in-law of GVH had come often to chat with Gertrude when she stayed with GVH to harvest her field her (lives in other village, her husband had moved to her because of her old mother who had no one else to take care of her). She told Gertrude that she has a boyfriend, but asked Gertrude not to tell anyone else. And this woman received always a lot from her husband in South Africa (e.g. 2000 MK each time). Her boyfriend also gave her money, like 100 MK. She liked him. Gertrude asked if they used condoms. No, forgot, and I like him, would like a child from him. If I would get pregnant now it would only be 1 month before my husband comes from South Africa, can pretend that the child is his. She defended her choice to have a boyfriend by saying that she doesn’t know what her husband is doing in South Africa, maybe sleeping with other women.

GVH is in relationship with the brother of this woman’s mother, says Jane, chief Mudzi B, Kondwani. They are not happy with this because it is not respectful to her husband who only died four months ago. “She has sons in South Africa who send her money. Why does she need to do this?” Gertrude asked DIL why GVH is in relationship with her uncle, DIL answered that the man has a lot of livestock, big fields, and lots of harvest. He paid to make a new nkholwe for GVH. Some times he spends the night at GHV’s house. A mat, lamp and pillow are then at the kitchen, but Jane believes GVH just puts them there to cheat people that they don’t have a relationship. E.g. there was no parafin in the lamp. GVH had once gone to his village to find materials for nkholwe. Stayed the night away and back without materials and later he brought the materials for her and paid to build it. Also kitchen is too small place to put a visitor, especially since there are other houses on the compound.

Phingi warned the sister of this man that the husband of GVH died of AIDS, but people didn’t believe her, thought she said this out of jealousy, because she had once said she wished she could marry someone with sons of son-in-law in South Africa so she could receive money from them.

GVH sent a granddaughter to get our bike and gallon to fetch water for us at [tiny crossroads market].

Jane and Sofia passed by, on way to look for nkhwani at a certain field where they thought they may find some. Around 8 am.

Early in the morning GVH came to ask whether Jane passed by here yesterday she had heard her voice, but Jane had not come to greet. “I don’t know what I did wrong; she could at least come and tell why she is (apparently) angry with me.” But went to stay with a friend “instead of eating nsima from my field, as if I don’t love her.”

Esnart came to greet and check on a jersey for her child that she had ordered but thought Gertrude had sold it to someone else. But is still here, will sell at 550, but 500 is fine too, she told Esnart. Thread is how 100 MK per ball, used 3.5 balls. Husband of Esnart sent her money to start making bricks for a house in her home village and afterwards she will go to South Africa.

On our way to Suset husband of Molly passed by on bike with gallon tried on back. On his way to fetch water - so he is helping her. Young man, boy even. Gertrude then told me that Nola [grandmother/aunt of most women living around her] had been remarking that Molly is the only one amidst the relatives living around her to be married. Why,
I asked. Maybe because she is quiet, doesn’t move around a lot to gossip with friends...

Suset invited us in her house, 3 chairs, small table with cloth, small bag of chips, bowl with 3 small tomatoes, a cane reek with cups and plates, 3 posters of Bingu (“Mose wa lero” one said, the modern Moses) and a curtain of UDF chitenje. She voted for Bingu because he promised to give fertilizer coupons to everyone and sell the fertilizers for 500 MK each while Muluzi said people have to pay 2800 MK. [Radio was on]. Imagine if people couldn’t pay the 800 of last year, how will they be able to pay 2800? “Has a bedroom and another small room for children and goats (laughing a bit ashamed). Front door of wood within frame and a look back door made of bamboo. Shares kitchen with grandmother for boiling her beer, but with own equipment and ingredients. Cooks on charcoal burner outside own house, unless her charcoal is finished, then in grandmother’s kitchen. Wants to start building her own kitchen this year. With what money, I ask. Then she tells of a new loan scheme that she is enrolling in of Rural Finance. Heard about it through one of her beer customers. One has to gather a group of 15 people and then register at Balaka. Suset will borrow 20 000 MK paying back 26 000 in total in 3 terms over period of 1 year. The 15 members come from different villages. From my villages only herself, Tulipesi and Jasmine (but Innocent will be the one attending all the meetings for Jasmine). Meetings will be held at Suset’s house. Doesn’t know when next meeting will be, extension worker from RF will let then know, then she will inform us. Loan will come 3 weeks from now. To be used to increase yields, but also for BS’s, people can decide themselves. She didn’t go around telling everyone, just spreading the word and interested people came to her and she went to Balaka to fill a form. Most people are afraid to take a loan, however. She plans to use it for her beer BS (and kitchen).

Passed by Julia’s house but saw no-one so continued walking. Then Victoria yelled from mother’s house that for all we know she may be ill inside! Then she came over to greet us. Rashida passed by and stopped to greet and chat too. Said she wants a baby suit for grandchild on back (which always wears hat knitted by Gertrude). Gertrude asked about cotton, they said it has been announced that the official buying will start on Monday June 1. All club members have to sell at least 1 bag at husband of Elube at 80 MK/kg. Other bags people plan to sell at [small crossroads market]. Official price is 75 MK/kg for non members but they too heard the rumour that ‘China’ will buy for go or 95 MK/kg, at [small crossroads market]. “Then we will be drinking tea with milk!” Victoria said, and bread, Gertrude added.

At Suset’s, Gertrude had asked how BS was going. She said last week many customers drank without paying because they didn’t have money but they know they will get soon from selling cotton. Is it not difficult to get that money from them later, I asked. Ah no, not difficult, Suset said. Gertrude then said to me that they may be afraid that they will not be served anymore if they don’t pay.

Kingsley came to tell that the borehole has been fixed now, and that he is happy because he hadn’t washed his body for 9 days.

Went to Venesi to pay for keeping track of her incomes and expenditure. Found Phingi and Dora kutonola Venesi’s maize. Both were looking for empty cobs to make fire. Phingi had first gone to field to get some there, then to Molly for tomatoes, then to Venesi for ‘firewood’ /fuel. Gertrude asked Venesi why some women who have their own income through BS or have enough food because they have a big field, still want to find someone to marry with. Because of human nature, you are an adult, you know what I mean: “Chifukwa cha chilengedwe munthu sangathe kukhala yekha. Ndiwe wamkulu, ukudziwa chomwe ndikutanthauza.” Gertrude didn’t translate back to me, we had agreed that she would ask something like this as if chatting. But she asked straight away, boom. Next question should have been: but what about the disease? Then I asked about her teaching of the topics that Concern Universal told her to teach: livestock and theft. The women in the class were not
After the topic trial all teachers met and had to report the problems they had faced to Concern Universal. Venesi pointed out that there were spelling mistakes in the book, the women were not interested in the topics and they lacked notebooks and pens. Concern Universal argued that they already supplied these materials to all participants, now they had to show their own commitment and buy new materials themselves. But the women said that they are not really interested anymore in helping them. On Monday the school will start again, Venesi was told yesterday by Mr Langmwale. But the women are not interested in coming anymore, I said. We will see who shows up, Venesi said, those who have not finished school will probably come, those who went far in primary school probably not anymore. Gave Venesi 3000 MK for tracking income and expenditure from half March till held May (couldn’t pay them up till now because I didn’t bring enough money).

When we got up to leave she [Venesi] informed Gertrude that the njiko [pump] has been fixed. Ex-husband of Fatima fixed it. But she too knows the working of the pump. If the boys would not be around, she and her friends would be able to fix it too. Ex-husband of Fatima had found yesterday that the parts cost more than what he had on him, so he went again this morning. Two parts at 250 MK each. All HHs pay 150 MK to the borehole committee each year, they will start collecting again soon because people will have money from cotton, will collect at the borehole. Jasmine was the treasurer, but she didn’t have the money available. Had to go and borrow now for the parts. (She said after I asked if it isn’t difficult to keep that money for such a long time). This time they decided to collect the money and buy the parts that are most likely to need replacement and have the treasurer keep those.

I also asked Venesi what explained that she does better in life than some other women (went far in school, has high yields, often selected for projects). She answered that she is often selected for projects because she does exactly as she is told. When they tell her to come immediately, for example, she goes immediately, while others may first finish what they were doing. Why do you do so? Don’t know, maybe just born that way.

Molly passed by with dengu lit full of tomatoes that we saw her harvest when sitting at Venesi’s. All green tomatoes. They turn red after some days. On table on veranda few small hips of tomatoes. She said Evelin went to [nearest trading center] today, so we couldn’t pay her and get record book. Nola was putting some of the rice that she just harvested to dry in the sun. After that, pounding. Total 9 bags. Will keep 3, because she has many grandchildren, and sell 1 later. Doesn’t know price yet, will see what others ask them.

Walking home Hilda asked to be photographed with bucket of water on her head. Excused that she felt free to ask me that (jokingly though, but I made picture) since I am free to ask her questions too.

Then told chief Mudzi B that I would like a picture of everybody in Mudzi B, since this is my last time here, and asked her to tell me when would be Good day. Afternoon, I said, because of sun.

Visited GVH to see divorce book, she brought out 2 big bags with books, among which an empty police report book and a Malawian law book. We could take the books to look at them it home.
husband of Aisha came with husband of Naima because he wanted picture. Was on his way to other wife with bag of tomatoes. Wanted 2 pictures. Husband of Naima joked that we should not forget that he has 2 houses, one is Blantyre, other Lilongwe, therefore wants 2 pictures, to give each wife one. When they left I asked Gertrude and Evelin where the other wife lived. Evelin answered at M. village, with matter of fact voice, general knowledge apparently, nothing special.

Evelin came because we had been looking for her this morning and decided to stay, saying she has nothing to do at home. So Gertrude brought out the needles and thread. I told Gertrude to try and to ask whether Evelin is never bothered by other women in the village for being single. Gertrude started by saying that in Lilongwe women that stay alone are often talked about as being prostitutes. What about here? Evelin said she had thought it would be different in the city from here, because here it is like that too. She is single herself, and many people say that she is in relationship with the husband of Elube but it is not true. Then she kept quiet. Later she asked about Sjaak and Gertrude explained that he is a professor from my school who to see how my research was going here, and to see the village where I am doing my research. Sofia said it was good that he came. Later at 5pm she came in the house to bid me farewell, she was going home to catch her goats. She also told Gertrude that Tuesday she wore a new chitenje to the borehole, and then Lovely asked her where she got that chitenje. “It is because I am not married (chifukwa ndine osakwatira), that people ask me these questions, that people watch closely and wonder where I get my things, suspecting it is through men (possibly relatives or even husband)” Evelin complained to Gertrude. While she received the chitenje (together with another chitenje and body lotion) as payment for ganyu harvesting, drying and kutonola maize, mixing with atelic for the daughter of Alma who stays in Blantyre (with uncle of Evelin that she writes in HH book to receive money from/calling to sometimes?). Did this ganyu together with Grace, Lizzie and possibly Hilda.

At lunch Gertrude first talked about Livia telling Chief Mudzi B that she will need a letter to officialize a divorce with the boy who paid to the chief to be married to her. Because he paid, they are still officially married and she is not free to marry someone else (although Gertrude thinks that the chief would not refuse to marry Livia to someone else now, if she would wish). Both men and women can request such letters to officialize divorce, but will have to pay something. Chief told Livia, and since then Livia has not gone to pay. One time her [Livia] official husband came and said he had wanted to give her money to buy a lot of maize for him now that it is cheap, to be selling when prices are high. But friends had warned him, told him to first give her a small amount and see if she does as he says. So he gave her 1500MK, but she didn’t buy maize, just ate the money. “I have your child,” she defended herself, complaining to him that he doesn’t give her any money. He wierp tegen that she often came to beg some money for ndiwo or soap, or would send a child to beg for her money. Gertrude then asked me whether people in NL divorce for same reasons as here. I asked what the reasons are here: when one of the two is caught having a relationship with another one, for example. I told her one may get into a second relationship in NL, but often tell the first one after some time that you want to divorce to be living with the new partner. She was surprised that people are thus open about it, here everything secretive. I said my parents still together, but Feye’s divorced because mother had affair with father’s best friend. Reminded her of story that Desi was involved with 2 brothers. Gertrude had come home from church meeting in evening and found bed room door closed (which they shared), so ate nsima in living room and listened to radio, putting on the hat of a boy that she found in room, which she recognized as cap of one of the 2 brothers. Then the other came, saw the cap too and threatened Gertrude with knife to tell who were in bedroom. Eventually Desi came out, brother threatened to kill both Desi and his brother. Landlord complained about Desi’s behavior, bringing in many boys while Gertrude was at work. They moved 3 times (first paying 500, then
1200, then 1500 MK) because landlords were not happy with Desi’s behavior. Gertrude could stay, but had to chase Desi, they said. After the brother-incidence Gertrude decided to buy her own bed, not share with Desi anymore because couldn't always enter, had to wait in evening before being able to sleep. But then Desi started to use Gertrude’s bed when Gertrude was working, for in case some other boyfriend would look for her in her own bedroom. Gertrude once found condom package in bedroom and was surprised, but only when she found a small corner of a wrap in her bed another time did she ask Desi who then admitted and said she wouldn’t do it again. Eventually it was Gertrude’s mother who told Gertrude it was better to start living alone. Initially all was fine. Her neighbours were young families, the men sometimes came to use her phone to flash. One day 1 neighbor said he would come that evening because he was tired of his wife and he liked her, Gertrude told him she didn’t want that. He knocked on her door anyway, but she didn't open. Later the other neighbor, who was always very respectful to her, also told her he had something to discuss with her and would come at 7 PM. When he came, she stepped outside but he said he couldn't discuss outside, but she persisted to stay outside. He said he’d be back at 9 PM, ok. Came back, she stepped outside again, he pushed that he wanted to see the inside of her house, that it could really not be discussed outside. But she declined. Both neighbors stopped greeting her, never talked to her again. Sometimes she had to stay in the house because both families were outside and angry with her.

I asked Gertrude whether she never at least tried to follow Desi’s behavior, seeing how easy it is to find money. Ever since Gertrude started menstruating, however, her mother had scared her by saying that if she would try sex once, she would immediately get AIDS and pregnant. So she was very afraid of it. Then when she saw Desi being busy with coming home from BS, wash, dress up nicely, spending money on nice hair and clothes etc, she didn’t fancy it. Found enough money for herself, sometimes 800-1000MK per day with the telephone buro. Desi and others would make fun of her, saying she was jealous with them because she couldn’t find a boyfriend herself. But many proposed to her! she defended herself. One time a boy had proposed chibwenzi and she thought about it seriously, until he saw him with another girl. He said she was just a friend, but the girl said she was his girlfriend. Since then she was afraid to trust boys. Now she has more experience in seeing who is serious and who is not, wants a boyfriend and marriage, but later, and only a serious one. For example will ask him to go for blood testing to check whether he is serious.

In case I forgot to write: Gertrude concluded that Suset is probably HIV positive from facts that she stopped breastfeeding her still very young child, eats meat often (image, at 350MK/kg!) and goes to Balaka without obvious reason. And Gertrude said (soon after I arrived back in Mudzi B on Saturday) that Livia had said that she didn’t have a boyfriend, “but a boy is buying cement for her floor, so she is lying.”

In NL (as earlier in Lilongwe) I felt it a bit dirty to piss and shit inside house.

Books of GVH: Ndondomeko ya milandu - case record book. Only 2 cases, first one November 1 2008. Emra has to pay 1 chicken and 5 Mk to GVH. The case itself is not described, but probably for sleeping with another man. The case was reported by her husban. In the table of content the cases are numbered by type of complaint and date (tsiku), but under ‘tsiku’ is only written ‘lachiwiri’ and ‘lachitatu’.

Case number 2 : a woman from J. village complains that her husband comes home late at night and she knows the woman with whom he is cheating her and she wants the chief to talk to this woman. December 3, 2008 registered. November 17 case was solved. Because it was within family no penalty has to be paid. In “man should not be going to the woman again because his wife will be angry and she will have high blood pressure “decided GVH.

Suset was first married to son of Jasmine [who now stays at J. village].
Village registration is at mess. From 1980’s to 2007, not in order of date, not complete not true either, it seems, eg Florence’s children registered under same father, also Teleza’s, Tumanene’s.

Village Mudzi B, Village code 99, Traditional Authority [small crossroads market], TA code 06, District Balaka, district code
13. Village Mudzi A, village code 49, many children born at home. At group Mudzi B totally registered in book 556 births of which 102 at home and 454 in hospital. But some people registered twice in book. Gertrude tells Sofia who gave birth to 2 children at home once helped by Jasmine, other one helped by herself. Kondwani gave birth in bushes on her way to hospital, GVH helped her. GVH had given her a brick to tie to her back to keep her from giving birth before reaching the hospital but didn’t help. Baby’s all survived. DIL of GVH gave birth to 2 in the hospital and 1 on her way to hospital. A passerby gave 100mk when she came out of the bushes with the baby, because although she didn’t reach [nearest trading center] hospital on time she managed to give birth.


Dora’s first son is from father of Jane.

Chief Mudzi B children from 3 different men. One still comes, a very fat man, who according to
Kondwani only comes when chief Mudzi B received money from her brother in SA to eat it. Is not the
father of last born [father last born related to Rosemary]. Came recently, then fought with Kondwani
who accused him of only coming when there is something to get.

May 28, Thursday

Rosemary is harvesting cotton in GVH’s field next to our house, yesterday too: ganyu.

Alida passed by with [young] grandson, both carrying tin of water on head. Husband of Naima passed them and asked Alida why she made the boy to carry water too. Because she will be using it to wash his clothes, she answered.

Most-if not all-men here are circumcised, because of initiation ceremony.

Kondwani [told Gertrude that the husband of Elube is now open to her about sharing the ndiwo he buys between Evelin and his wife had bought 200mk matemba, half for Evelin, half for wife”]. He had also said that he likes Evelin because she looks like mzungu Janneke, light skinned. People say Evelin is enjoying half of his salary, and since he has a lot of cotton, she will get half of that too. Gertrude asked Kondwani why Elube does not go to GVH to complain. Kondwani said that Elube had threatened her husband that she would, but he replied: what evidence do you have? E.g a piece of cloth from Evelin found in this house. If you go to GVH you will not have any witness. Just leave me if you don’t want this marriage. Kondwani said that Elube and Evelin don’t greet each other. Indeed one day when Evelin was here chatting, Elube passed by and only greeted Gertrude. Molly told other women that if they come at night they will find him at Evelin’s house. She was also the one who alerted Gettie [living near tiny crossroads market] that her husband was at Pamela’s house. Within 10 minutes Gettie came and caught them red handed. But apparently Elube does not want to catch her husband-and loose half salary?

When Venesi’s son in SA heard about Pamela being caught with Gertrude’s husband he sent a message that he will never send money to help Pamela because of this behavior. That he had planned to help her because she is alone, but now changed his mind, will only be helping his girlfriend and mother.
Evelin told Gertrude yesterday that she plans to go to Balaka to see Bingu. All the way to Balaka just to see Bingu, Gertrude asked unbelievingly. Ah, she has nothing to else to do today, Evelin answered. Gertrude thinks that maybe she will be meeting husband of Elube there who is building at Balaka hospital. In Evelin’s HH book she writes that she buys small things at shops in different villages on same day, sometimes as far apart as M. village and J. village. Gertrude thinks maybe to be meeting with boyfriend/husband of M. village. She gets money from different people (uncle Chiponye=husband of daughter of Alma at Blantyre) or writes that she didn’t receive anything but still had some money left from the 2000mk I gave her half March as payment for keeping track of HH finances for first 2 weeks. May be cover ups for money she receives from a boyfriend/husband of Elube. Another strange thing in her HH book is the high quantity and frequency in which she buys lotion.

To Mudzi A II to greet everyone and talk more elaborately with Victoria, who is an example of a woman who manages well without husband. Gertrude said it is better to ask in general way, she did so with Venesi yesterday. Venesi then soon started about her own example. So I asked: what difficulties do women here find if they stay without husband? Amavutikira, it will be difficult for them to find soap, paraffin, body lotion, or build their house, dig toilet, build nkhokwe”. Only then did she start about herself, that she able to pay for ganyu for field, build house etc, because she grows many different crops for sale. I asked her later how she manages to do so well without husband, she answers that she always makes a budget. After selling crops she puts money aside to pay for her daughter’s school fees, ganyu, soap for a number of months. Some women who may be able to take care of themselves, may just want someone to chat with, to accompany them”. Even if he is not proving all the things she wants. What about herself? Ah no has children and mother to chat with.

I told her that other single women had told us that other women feel threatened by them, jealous that they may be sleeping with their husbands. Yes happens to her too. People gossip about women that stay alone, saying/suspecting that they are moving around, having secret relationships. Like herself, she often goes to the church to help there (indeed when we went to her we found her on her way to the church, to discuss something about Pentecostal), e.g. mop etc. And the priest (ansemba) sometimes came to her house to discuss something. So people say that she is in relationship with one or some them, because she always looks nice and clean, compared to others, so there must be someone proving soap for her. Also Gertrude thinks someone must be helping her, also because we had once seen a man sitting behind her house. What else would he be doing there, maybe one of the priests, nowadays they often propose to women. Especially if they want to be helping someone, they propose to her”. I asked whether men visit her, thinking she may be wanting company, like what Gertrude told me about her neighbors in Lilongwe. Yes happens here too, that men knock on doors of unmarried women (divorced, widowed).But not to her, because she is staying in the house with children and her mother, so men are ashamed to come. But if she would be staying alone...

She doesn’t want to remarry, afraid of the same behavior as her previous husband: he had several relationships and she was afraid to find the disease. Also if she would remarry (and divorce and remarry) people will be saying that she likes men too much. But you were able to take care of yourself and children, but what about other women? I asked, Why do other women stay with a husband that moves around, despite of becoming HIV infected? Ulesi. They are afraid that they won't be able to find themselves what their husbands used to give them to take care of themselves and children. Amangokhala [they just stay], especially if their husband has a lot of money. They prefer to receive at least a part of it (sharing it with other women) then not receiving anything at all.
Gertrude says again that it cannot happen, that this woman [Victoria] finds enough money through her own means (selling crops like cotton, tobacco, maize; salary for teaching at Adult school; seminars etc) to build such a nice house with iron sheets, buy soap and food for her children, pay school fees without somebody helping her, it cannot happen.

Another thing I don’t understand, I said, is why men in general have more money than women. Well, Victoria says, men are better at focusing at starting something and be serious about it, continue with it. While women try many things without finishing, soon trying something else. And,(when I probe for other possible reasons) men can go to the lake for example for their BS and stay there for 1 month or 2 and make money, while if women do that people will think she is married there, having relationships. And when women who stay behind see that this happens to a woman who has gone away for business they are afraid to go too, avoiding to be gossiped about like that. I suggest that it may also be more difficult for women to go away for a while because they may have children that they have to take care of, or and care for while men not. Was half heartedly confirmed and I suggested may be also because parents are more serious about sending their sons to school rather than daughters? Victoria confirmed this, saying that in other districts both boys and girls work hard in school, but Yao girls are just interested in marriage. Also Yao parents are more interested in getting their daughters married when they reach puberty rather than have them finish their school. In Mangochi, Machinga -where many Yao people live.

When I had talked with Gertrude about her reasons for not moving around with boys yesterday, she had also explained that she saw the example of her sisters, who married young (copying the behavior of their Yao friends in Mangochi) and led a poor life, struggling.

Where son of Hamra made a pile of dried bricks, there also neat piles of different sizes of firewood. And a 3 meter deep pit, rectangular, approximately 1.5 by 0.5 meter, for the toilet.

Chief Mudzi A asked a picture in front of the new bafa he made behind his house. So indeed not very serious about moving to Mudzi B.

Gertrude is surprised that only few people planted sweet potatoes, which are very easy to plant and don’t take long to grow. I said that I saw many children walking around eating a mbatata these days. Have been bought, answered Gertrude. When Kingsley harvested his sweet potatoes many people from this village went to buy. Husband of Filimona is also selling, they sell 20 MK for 9 (or 3 big) potatoes, while people could easily get them for free if they would have planted. May thinking that by then they would have money from selling their maize to buy potatoes. Kondwani: planting is during hunger season and then making ridges seems like a lot of work, because tired because of lack of food. Florence was harvesting cotton in her field alone second round.

The moon has come back, Gertrude comments that people will now hurry to get their cotton of the field because it will be easy to steal with light of moon.

On my way to Mudzi A II husband of Belita came from side path with 2 women, all very drunk. When we later went to Belita’s house to greet her, he came to greet me, I could not understand what he said, too drunk. Gertrude translated that he called me his wife.

Mother of Belita was brewing beer. Meriam said she wasn’t brewing, “umphawi”, no money for ingredients. Aren’t you growing cotton, Gertrude asked surprised. Yes, yes, she confessed, will sell on Monday and they start brewing again. She complained about lacking salt, can only be bought far, possibly hoping I would give some again. So I suggested she buys a big bag of salt with her cotton
money and start selling it here. She intends to do so indeed, also paraffin and soap, matches.

Has daughter-in-law bring us some boiled nandolo (pigeon peas) in skin—which they will be eating for lunch, without nsima because it will satisfy their stomach without nsima too. Like at pumpkin time, Gertrude says later, then people sometimes only eat pumpkin for lunch. I say that we don't have nandolo in our country, Gertrude too says there are no pigeon peas where she comes from. Where is that? Meriam makes use of this opportunity. Dedza, but met me in Lilongwe. Ah yes, we were wondering how you could have met up. Had been surprised that Gertrude was willing to work with me. Sometimes Italian azungu come to their church, saying they are willing to take a child with them to take care of, but people here are afraid to give their children, thinking that they will be cooked and eaten there. Gertrude also told me and Sjaak earlier that in the beginning people had been afraid that I had come to steal their blood. Two years ago people had come, hiding and stole blood.

Grandmother of Ganizani commented that I got very fat since last time she saw me, "they must have been harvesting where she was."

Bonny is pregnant I saw when we greeted her. Women in Mudzi B don’t gossip much about that side [Mudzi A II], Gertrude only heard them about Bonny's husband who does not seem to be going back to SA, lazy. Half March Zain lowered its cell phone prices from 2000 to 1000 Mk-smart move, just when people would start harvesting and find money.

At lunch time GVH came by, had visited mud stove instruction project at [tiny crossroads market]. Apparently wants me to go there too, because Mr Langmwale said I had promised I would (he had only told me to go and see), and I guess she feels pleased if I please him. I asked what she thought of the project. Iii, she couldn’t do it, it’s a lot of work to do those stoves, takes from 6 A.M. to 6 P.M, too much work not complicated though. The ones that are made now will be sold- so that’s the benefit for those women making them (only women?). If people will not buy, they will probably stop soon. The ones that are trained now, by people from Lilongwe, will be training people in other surrounding villages. Victoria is apparently not there. GVH was asked to attend, but she puts harvesting her cotton on a higher priority.

Daughter of Venesi (born 1992) is pregnant again. Kondwani says that Levison is the father. They met every day in the banana trees at the dambo at 5/6PM. She says she goes to get tomatoes he passes there on his way from Balaka where he is building. Her body and face are fat now and she doesn't go to fetch water anymore, ashamed that other women will see she is pregnant again. Nobody knows who is the father of her first child. While pregnant she mentioned several boys as the father, Kondwani told Gertrude, but the baby’s face does not resemble any of them. When Gertrude asked the girl about she just said he is from this village, but refused to tell her more. People say she is just copying the behavior of her mother, thinking it is good to have several relationships. Many couples meet for sex at those banana trees.

Kondwani said today that Livia was also pregnant from Levison, but she aborted. Levison even went to the chief to complain that Livia was telling everybody that he had impregnated her while not and his wife would get angry about it at him. Chief told him to discuss the issue with Livia's mother, but Gertrude doesn't know whether he did it. Gertrude says that she indeed had seen them chatting when MASAF was paying (but maybe because Levison still owed money to Livia). But Gertrude doesn’t believe Levison was the father, because Livia never spoke about him. But also doesn’t believe that the boyfriend from Balaka was the father, because she could have told him if it was him. Maybe didn't sleep with him and therefore couldn't tell him.
Evelin and Venesi passed by on in afternoon with basin, plates and some other things coming back from Balaka where they attended Bingu gathering. Knitting women (Sofia, Kondwani, Ellesi and Chikondi) commented. Where do they find money at this time? Imagine what they will be buying when start selling cotton! Was money I gave for HH books.

Bingu announced today in Balaka and on radio that indeed official buying of cotton will start Monday for at least 75Mk/kg.

Kondwani is only one of whom Gertrude heard that she plans to start a business after selling cotton (and today Meriam). Jasmine and Innocent did not mention. Livia said she plans to go to sister at Mangochi. "Definately somebody will propose to me there, and I will accept.”

Curious to see how soon business will start after the cotton selling starts. we'll go to [nearest tradingcenter] on Tuesday to see Balaka market will be very busy too. Gertrude thinks, and everything will be more expensive because sellers know that buyers have money. Because she noticed that at Kanengo everything became more expensive too at time of tobacco selling.

Kingsley has lots of cotton, Sofia told Gertrude. Already harvested twice 8 bags, and now harvesting (alone) for third time.

Victoria also said this afternoon that women who run business are bigger risk of HIV infection- just like Gertrude said earlier. Because they move around a lot, sometimes going very far to get their merchandise, maybe even having to stay the night. Then men may propose to spend the night together and the woman can think she'll find more money like that and accept.

Yesterday I asked Gertrude whether giving money after sex may be perceived as showing respect (that a woman feels used when a boy sleeps with her and then leaves her nothing), but Gertrude was not very out spoken about this. No obvious confirmation.

Gertrude brought out the 2 full baby sets that she had knitted for Chikondo's twin. When Chikondi received 2000Mk from me yesterday for 2 weeks of recording her HH finances she immediately brought 1000Mk to Gertrude for the baby suits that cost 700 each. The remaining 400 will come later. The women asked Chikondi whether her husband is paying for these. She said: I don't have a husband, he more like my brother because we don't sleep together. He only comes sometimes to greet sometimes spends the night, but leaves early in the morning to back to his wife, doesn't help me with anything in or around the house.

Chikondi said that Mr Ntawanga had said that the cotton price will be 35Mk/kg. Which made her decide to not plant any cotton next year, but in stead a lot of hybrid maize. She is happy because she harvested 6 bags of hybrid maize more than local maize. So next year will work hard to buy enough chemicals.

Gertrude bought 1 bottle of actellic to prevent weavils in the maize. She bought 900Mk enough for 8 bags, 12 months. Did not buy hybrid maize but only local maize because of higher risk of weavils in hybrid maize.

Sofia said the GVH is angry with her for not helping harvesting cotton, but child is ill, therefore not helping. [Sofia] Happy because received chicken from Jane's father so now has 1 piece of livestock. Kondwani's chicken laid 10-15 eggs so will have many chickens, K said happily.
Kondwani started about the man who proposed to Ellesi and how he had cheated her that he was not married and would come to meet her, how her mother had been telling everyone that she had son-in-law in SA. Ellesi said she should stop telling about this, that herself had already forgotten about him, happy that she to prepare for examinations at school to focus on.

Julia shortly joined us outside. When she left women commented that at least she looked clean now, but her children still dirty." Other mothers would be ashamed to have other people see their children so dirty”.

I brought out chocolate for women sitting outside, but is a difficult thing because they don’t want others to say that they only come here to eat (sweets). Indeed when Naima shortly came to greet she immediately saw and commented on the "sweets”.

I texted Sjaak that the knitting club had, gathered again, that the women had been ashamed to come while he was here. Ashamed or shy? He answered shy, but also to prevent gossip and insinuations that they would have only come to get something from him. Oei, he replied, that may cause problems with the baby powder milk.

Gertrude describes her afternoon at the Adult school again: under the tree, but most women not serious, chatting too loud to hear the teacher, not bringing even their pencils. Elube went to sit at some distance saying that she was cold but that she could hear what was being said. Venesi was teaching about ziweto, asked women to mention the types of livestock she wrote those on board and asked women one by one to read the words out loud. Then she said she saw that everybody was tired because they had been harvesting and that tomorrow they were going to draw a map of the village with all the livestock that the various houses had. Women had to bring some maize or stones to represent the types of livestock. And that tomorrow they had to come in time. Within a few minutes the class was over. The next day they indeed draw the map of the village in the sand, the women helped each other. Then Venesi drew the map on a paper and showed everyone. Again the class had only taken short period of time. Then Venesi told the women to go to GVH to help her make thobwa for the 40 day ceremony of husband.

Husband of Dora has left her again. People are laughing about this, saying he just came to eat her maize. Maybe his other wife started calling him wondering why he suddenly stayed away maybe the other woman had given birth and the no-sex months were over, maybe he got tired of Dora, or he didn’t want to harvest her cotton out, laziness or shame. As he had come unannounced Dora had no time to go injection, so maybe she is pregnant now, women discussed.

After Sjaak had been talking to son of Hamra, the son said to Gertrude that this man had asked him whether he can cook. So the son asked Gertrude to tell Sjaak he can cook very well indeed, because maybe Sjaak wanted to hire him as a cook, he concluded from the question.

Hamra was disappointed that Sjaak had left because “he had promised to get me bag for my clothes” while Sjaak had only said that he would think about it. Which may be enough hereto be seen as confirmation. Like Gertrude who told Kingsley that “we will not forget about him” after coming back from Lilongwe next week. I want to give them some money to thank him for at our house last 2 months to protect.

May 29, Friday
Grace came by on her way to work at [small crossroads market] shop for some new knitting work. Told Gertrude that her boss gave her the bike on which she travels up and down there and she receives 4000Mk per month for 6 days a week. Tomorrow she plans to go to Balaka to buy hair chemicals. Gertrude had seen the man cycle towards Grace’s house the day before she started working there, he had gone to ask around there whether someone was interested in working for him and Grace then offered herself.

When Chikondi passed by on way to borehole with only one of her babies Gertrude warned her that there are many women at the borehole. Chikondi answered that she would just cheat them that she has a crying child at home (and thus needs to hurry).

Gertrude asked Grace why she wanted a job since she has a boyfriend; he cannot provide everything that I want, I can’t just depend on him for getting all that I want, that’s why decided to start working there. She is happy that she can be knitting while waiting for customers.

Tinenenji (pregnant) passed on her way to her field to get some nandolo for ndiwo. Gertrude told her to come to receive the picture I brought for her. When sitting at our veranda Elube passed by and kneeled to greet Tinenenji. Tinenenji then also kneeled and greeted Elube back. Showing respect between mother-in-law (apongozi) and daughter-in-law (since Tinenenji carries Elube’s son child-although they are not in relationship).

Sofia this morning helped GVH harvesting cotton will not formally paid for it, but after receiving the money GVH will probably ”remember Sofia” and give her some too.

Visited the mud stove making site west of [tiny crossroads market] village. About 10 women and 1 man (chief Kambaula) among the women was also chief [tiny crossroads market]. One was taking clay a rectangular hole in soil (kept in hole for 19 days always wet covered with plastic). Two of the women were instructors brought in from other district, local women. A boy from GTZ was sitting in a bench reading news paper. He had come to instruct on the building of oven to burn the pots. Our near by house was already filled with ports to dry. On bottom of pot women had written their names or first letter-will receive 500Mk for each pot they sell. An open day will be organized when the stoves have been burnt to demonstrate the use and sell to those who are interested for 500Mk. Gertrude thinks the stoves are good, but not many will buy too much money for something they can do on 3 stones as they are used to, “if it would have been charcoal burners it would have been better, because those only cost 300Mk”.

Mr Langwmale was away to buy ndiwo, but came back soon. He first said several times that people are VERY interested. Only later when I about his opinion why there is still hunger and poverty in Malawi in spite of so many projects did he say that there is some unwillingness from the villagers to participate. That they had hoped about 30-40 could be participating in the making of these stoves but only about 10 were willing. Because of illiteracy, they don’t see the benefit prefer doing the things they are used to do minding their own business, working on the field for example. When they become literate they become more critical thinkers and will understand the benefit, the need for development. But what do they need read and write for, I provoked, no newspapers to read or shopping lists to write. True, but mathematics will help them, eg calculating how much fertilizer they need. Or to see whether they make profit, I added. Before mentioning this reason for low impact of projects he said that many projects used to be initiated from government or organizations. But now there is ‘decentralization’: (local) people should initiate and ”own” the projects. This project is really owned by people, he said. Gave this reason why there are no allowances involved: they own the training. Nothing, he emphasized cheerfully, they get absolutely nothing! Insinuating that they are
thus truly interested in learning (GVH had said that the benefit is that the women will earn 500Mk per sold stove).

They don’t even get a soft drink or lunch, assured the GTZ boy to me. Although Langwmale is proving ndiwo-but they feed him too, so. Meat every day! he said happily. Ah so there is a benefit for them, I remarked laughing. But why not, I asked, if not here these women could at least be harvesting cotton (either own or ganyu). Then Langwmale blamed GTZ, these are their rules: the participants should get nothing from the training because it is in their benefit.

Mainly women are participating, but anyone can choose to join. CU started with some information meeting, during which Reflect facilitators were selected 'by the community themselves', but CU criteria were: Literacy and willingness to work only a volunteer payment. Venesi for Mudzi B, Victoria for Mudzi A. Why women more active? May be cultural, Langwmale answered. When I probe, he said that men have to leave their home village after marriage to join wife so villages are not theirs, may feel less urged or responsible to work for the betterment of these communities that are not theirs.

This ”Energy Saving Project” started in January 2008 and will run till end 2012: Project documents were written by people from Malawi headquarters in Blantyre, country representative etc. Is only undertaken here in Balaka (although in Thyolo groups were also taught to make round stoves and according to Langwmale the group there already banked 3 million Mk by selling the stoves,” they are successful, even from Zomba and Zambia people came to buy.

The project started with a baseline in the majority of the villages in TA [Traditional Authority catchment] M.. Second output: literacy classes. Third output mud stove making. Next output will be business management, eg organize individual entrepreneurs in groups. "But we have one enemy". Langwmale said: the charcoal vendors. We need to organize them too and get them to switch to other income generating activities. CU has provided the mud stove makers with a starter pack, like a mold (a tin bucket without bottom) and the bricks for the oven. These they can keep. The group is meant to continue making the stoves, even after tomorrow (=last instruction day, then the trainers go away again). Langwmale’s role is to oversee= sitting, reading newspaper, eat (a woman brought him a plate of groundnuts). The mud stove instructions have been started for only 19 groups now in TA M. [tiny crossroads market] was selected "because of shown interest by the community themselves", and because they had a place to get clay within the village," so they were more likely to actually do it”...

Langwmale grew up in village in Chikwawa. After school he got a diploma in community development, which took 3 years. Then he worked 4 years for the government in Nkhotakota, under Ministry of Women and Children, working with all sorts of projects like MASAF and Action Aid. Was trained on Reflect by Action Aid. Then he was asked by Concern Universal to work on a water sanitation project in Thyolo: (re) installing boreholes and shallow wells and toilets. By the end of the 3 year project 70% of the target community had water and sanitation so very successful. Salary etc much better at Concern Universal than government. But when project phased out he was unemployed. Worked with another organization (CARD org.) but for lower salary. After one month applied with Concern Universal again for this Energy Saving Project in Balaka and was selected. Lives in Balaka boma although he should actually be staying in rural area, he admitted," but there are many difficulties like electricity etc" gets house allowance on top of salary which is enough to rent a nice house in Balaka boma. And is in villages every day. Is married with 2 children, wife is from Nkhotakota. They do not cultivate land, because fertilizer is very expensive,10,000 Mk/50 kg. But all these people here, pointing at the women busy making the clay pots, they can get it for subsidized price. But many don’t even have the money for that so they sell the already arranged with some of the chiefs that next year he will buy a
lot of fertilizer coupons from them. He said to Gertrude that he had heard she was buying maize, how many. Gertrude answered honestly that she bought 9 maize, 1 g/nuts. And then she asked him, he bought 30 bags. To sell too, Gertrude and I asked at the same time. But he said for food, for his own family and to send to relatives in Chikwawa and Mzuzu because rains stopped there early January, so they harvested very little. When he heard that Gertrude bought only local maize he was surprised, "You're lucky! How come you managed to do that?" he asked. May be I was the first to start buying.

He could only buy hybrid which is much more difficulty to keep for long time. Also GVH could only buy hybrid (which people grow indeed mainly to sell), some cheated her putting a small layer of local on top of the hybrid maize. Coming season Langwmale plans to rent land for cotton. Tobacco is too much work, too much difficult. He didn't know that cotton selling will start on Monday, asked Gertrude the price. But then said that he doesn't think the companies will indeed be paying the price prescribed by Bingu, because of 'liberalization'. Bingu also tried to set a price for tobacco, but the foreign buyers did not give a shit and as soon as he left the auction hall they lowered their prices again.

Kissing is not usual here, says Gertrude, although people learn about it now through movies. When she was watching movies at boarding school though, kissing parts would be turned of. Then the older girls would be protesting, but the nuns said. "You just want to be practicing this".

Only Ellesi came to knit after school (why not harvesting cotton on her mother’s field?), Gertrude asked her why she accepted marriage proposal from man in SA. He allowed her to continue school while he would stay in SA and pay for school fees.

Ellesi said she saw Goldy, daughter of Venesi, getting fat just like the first time she was pregnant. Gertrude asked about father of child, but Ellesi doesn't know either. When Grace was washing clothes at borehole a woman had asked her why she is getting so fat, was she eating nice food? Now Grace doesn't go borehole anymore.

Teleza came to ask if Gertrude could crosh 10 zipewa for a boy from Lilongwe, who probably plans to sell them there.

Julia ordered a hat to go with the pants and vest that Gertrude knitted for her youngest child from the thread of the old vest she had given. Gertrude asked if Julia wants to knit this and get the money for it, Ellesi accepted.

Balakasi now also came to have the cell phone that her son sent from SA explained the same one that husband of Naima came with. She said it is too complicated, she wants to sell it and buy a simpler one. Now who is the owner of the phone and what happened to Balakasi's other phone?

Quite a lot of chibwenzi relationships within these 2 villages, I said to Gertrude who then started to list them. I asked about people commenting that it is better to find a partner from far away. Especially boys want that. Gertrude said girls will accept anybody. Later she added: anybody they like. Boys want from far for same reason as husband of Naima said: is difficult to find a girl who respects you amidst the girls you grew up with, played with as a child. Gertrude said that especially boys with businesses are liked, but also those that have relatives in SA. When I asked about Ellesi's possible interest in Kingsley (who only started to grow cotton this year, so after they were in a relationship): the clothes he wears are often sent from SA by younger brothers of his deceased father. Gertrude "His father was first born of GVH, so definitely the other sons in SA will be helping him."
May 30, Saturday

Rosemary and Sodia harvesting cotton on GVH’s field.

Levison already drunk or still drunk in early morning, and radio very loud. He apparently received his salary, which Gertrude thinks cannot be different from husband of Kingsley, 6000 Mk. He said to Gertrude that he wants another picture for his wife, because the other one he gave to his girlfriend. He liked the picture because he looks fat on it because it was before the hunger season (yelling from some distance, so not afraid to mention his girlfriend in pubic). One time Thokozani had accused him from stealing maize from her mother, they fought and left for some days. Coming back he said he spent the nights at guest house in Balaka for 100Mk/night=no electricity, just a mat with 1 blanket. No girlfriend to stay with? Or was he lying about this? Gertrude thinks he have stayed with the woman he bragged about, who told him several times that she wants to sleep with him. But I think he could have been open about this to take revenge at Thokozani. Gertrude doubts because it was middle of the month, where would he have found that money?

Gertrude remarks at breakfast that Chikondi often writes that she pound maize for other women. You don’t think it is true, I ask. No, with 2 small babies, doesn’t think that women would ask her, thinking that she doesn’t have the power for it. Indeed, even at her own house 2 girls were doing the pounding rather than herself. So you think she hide something. I probe, but who would propose to a woman with 2 young babies? Ah, they can/will, especially knowing the behavior of her husband they will think she needs support.

Venesi and Pamela are full sisters, Harvey Tunga is full brother (husband of Haliday). Their mother was called Fissa,. Evelin has same father, but mother is not mentioned in book. Rosemary is also included in book, so must have been filled recently. Fulanki Ziwiya first husband of Livia is also in book. All names from Mudzi B are in book twice. Adela, daughter of Alma (born 1985), also registered in book as inhabitant of Mudzi B. Her husband is from M. village, may be they lived at Mudzi B for some time before moving to Blantyre. Some people I can’t find in the book, often not everything is filled.

Gertrude: love is giving the girl what she wants.

I asked her if she is not afraid that men may find her too old to propose too, but she doesn’t think so. But they may be thinking that she already has a boyfriend.

At lunch (nsima, eggs, cabbage-again) I asked Gertrude what she think will happen the coming weeks after cotton buying starts: women can find their own money and won’t need boyfriends or will be more willing to accept proposals because they know there is money to be found. Definitely the last. Livia was already anticipating that after selling cotton her boyfriend (rasta) will be taking her to buy clothes. Pamela was saying how her boyfriend would be buying her plates because he has a lot of cotton.

Lii, Gertrude said, husband of Elube also has a lot of cotton, Evelin will be enjoying a lot of his money too. So you are convinced that she is in relationship with him even though she denies? Yes, because many people say so. Especially Molly must really know as she lives next to Evelyn, definitely she can see him go in or out the house sometimes. Elube has so many kids to take care of, forcing her to accept that she has to have her husband’s income. May be afraid about what happened to Gertrude after she caught husband with Pamela.
About Jane and vegetable selling marriage proposer: She thought she could just make use of his interest, keep him giving to her for few months (indeed he came with veggies, matemba, cooking oil), before ditching him because she doesn't want a farmer as husband. But she hadn't expected he would be so serious, coming everyday. One day she was called from chatting with Gertrude to go and greet him because he had gone to GVH's house again. Soon after she came back and disappeared, telling Gertrude she doesn't want him. After a few hours waiting GVH had told the boy he better take his matemba and eat with his parents, and look for another wife elsewhere because apparently Jane wasn't interested in him. So, I concluded, GVH has no power over Jane, make her marry or at least please this boy to get his matemba. Gertrude then added that Jane's father likes boyfriend in Balaka, because this one had come to bring him milk and bread when he was in hospital.

Mr Langwmale came to bring Reflect documents as well as baseline questionnaire.

3SF: Have you ever gone for HIV test? Without first saying that they will not be asked about results 36h. When do you wash your hands? Multiple choice options given, but do not include “before eating”.

Kondwani and Vanessa said at bore hole that they heard from people at [small crossroads market] that 'China' will buy cotton at 90Mk/kg at [small crossroads market] starting on Monday. Asked Gertrude to help them carry their cotton to [small crossroads market].

REFLECT approach partly influenced by highly politicized guerillas in El Salvador. What happened when Fidel Castro and/ Che Guevara came to Africa? Why no revolution here?

Gertrude went to collect firewood with Sofia, who told Gertrude that Livia had told her that she found a new boyfriend in Balaka. They had met last week, he is older. Yesterday they met for second time and he gave her 500Mk. Sofia’s husband sent 500Mk too and a packet of sugar, via a friend after he had been selling clothes at [nearest tradingcenter]. The friend is from this village and arrived in dark hours, 7 pm, Sofia was already sleeping but opened the door when he said he came to bring her money from her husband. Jasmine and Innocent thought Sofia had invited a man to spend the night with her and wanted to hide his bicycle so they could see who it is. Sofia overheard them because she was just sitting at the veranda. Angry with them, but didn't say anything.

Have you seen Grace, Sofia asked Gertrude, working at the shop whose owner likes to sleep with girls. He has never hired boys to work in his shop, only girls. Sofia is convinced that Grace will also be in relationship with him. Today her boyfriend had come to see her, stayed with her for long time. Sofia's husband borrowed 4000Mk to his father (husband of Jasmine) to buy maize, will pay back after selling his cotton.

Chikondi had said that I will be distributing blankets when making the picture, because I will be going. Sofia told her that yesterday I had really only made a picture at Mudzi B, but Chikondi answered that in Mudzi A I will give blankets. At the meeting at Mr Ntawanga's house Gertrude emphasized that indeed I only want to make picture for them to remember me and vice versa. I felt sorry for the old women who walked all the way from Mudzi A II.

Mr Ntawanga said we should wait for Mr Chikombo, who wanted to attend, thinking that I am leaving now. After the picture both Mr Ntawanga and chief Mudzi A gave a speech that I had said from beginning that I will only do research and that they should not expect more. Gertrude says we better gather the people from both the villages when giving a goodbye speech, otherwise they will be cheating each
other over what I gave or Joyd them.

Fish vendor said to Kondwana that he will come to her house this night. Then Kondwani answered loudly so that the other women at our house could hear that this is now the second time for him to say this but she doesn’t want, he should just go to other women. The vendor reprimanded her for talking so loud, that it was a secret. Kondwani bought matemba for 30 Mk, Vanessa also.

Tinenenji said that she wants a baby boy, who may later go to SA and send her support.

Young sister of Dorica passed by to buy paraffin. Women commented that she is now alone because Dorica went to visit her father at Mangochi to chat for some days. He had explained to her how to find him.

Emra said that she advised the man who had proposed marriage to Livia via her that Livia decided to go back to school again and that Livia likes men. No problem, he said, I’ll find someone else. Women discussed that it will be difficult for Livia to find a husband, everybody in village will tell the interested men that she likes men too much.

Livia stopped coming here as often as before, not chatting, not knitting. May be she got fed up with all the questions that Gertrude asked, says Gertrude. First Gertrude thought she is just too busy, but Sofia said that today she was just playing cards with her mother.

Husband of Naima passed by in dark, came to greet politely and begged for a picture of the two of us. Then apologized for being very drunk. He had gone to drink with husband of Filimona, who is now sleeping at graveyard, too drunk to get home. husband of Naima currently does BS of tomatoes, and is probably spending all his money on celebration of fact that on Monday he will find lot of money. Maybe no big plans everywhere for BSs because no need to make money!

Discussed with Gertrude about ways to thank women: chitenje for all the women we interviewed = app 85. Plus a goodbye party for everybody in the 2 villages, with beef, rice & lemonade. App 400 Euro (incl transport ed).

Walked to chigayo: only few buildings, of which one the chigayo (ufa everywhere) and a shop. Some women selling guave and tomatoes under tree. Maize is being bought. We then walked on on road between Balaka and [nearest tradingcenter], towards Balaka, to see “J. village town”: indeed some more & better houses, and one big shop with bicycle tires and even 1 mountainbike for sale, clothes, underwear and all the usual items. Three people were inside, a man eating thick porridge. A young woman sold us some breads (small & homemade a 5 MK, big & factory made a 15MK, Gertrude though the factory ones would be best). Next to shop many bags of maize and a scale, and men around it. Gertrude said that women who want to buy something go here, pretending they go to the maize mill, but then sell maize and buy whatever they want next door.

Main question for coming cotton selling days: Do women feel they don’t need men now because it’s easy for them to find money by themselves, or are they more likely to get involved with men, knowing they have money??

Walking to chigayo I asked Gertrude whether she looks forward to going back to Lilongwe: best wel. What
did you miss? Friends, mainly. No coke, fanta etc? Ah no. What will you miss from here? Living with you. No friends? Ah no. But you talked with many women, made no friends. But most just came for some time and then stopped coming. If they could have come all the time, then I could miss them. But if they would come all the time, others will say they come to get something from me, lot of gossiping, jealousy. Why so much gossiping here? Jealousy, or maybe just used. Same in area 25? There also, but less. Especially what Chikondi was saying: that unmarried women are watched closely. If you have new clothes or hair style they will say you have a boyfriend, especially when Gertrude found job as teacher and people didn't know yet that she had found job, and thus income. Earned 6000/month. But many of her old friends in Lilongwe have now married. One will have her wedding ceremony beginning of July and wants Gertrude to be brides maid. Bride and groom met at church choir. Church is good opportunity for many to meet boys/their boyfriends, and for boys to look for new boyfriends. Are they in love, I asked. Ah no, love grows bit by bit after staying together for some time. The girl just felt that she was getting at the age that it is good to find someone to marry, and she was lucky that a serious boy proposed.

Met boy who was in relationship with Lucia (who sold mandasi at [tiny crossroads market]), Gertrude hoorde hem uit over their relationship. He had done MSCE exams but didn't pass as he wanted, wants to do them again, which disappointed Lucy who had thought they'd get married soon. But he wasn't ready yet. So split up now. Indeed, when Lucy had once asked Gertrude to flash him, he didn't call back, said Gertrude.

Boy at Chigayo was drinking softdrink, smoking cigarette. Said price would be 20 in stead of 10 because of mzungu. But Gertrude refused and he agreed, but wanted picture. Gertrude thinks he is employed by owner, must be paying him high salary because otherwise stealing too much, easy to steal. I suggested he must be having many girlfriends, which Gertrude assured me indeed. When I later commented on the softdrink and cigarette and that he probably got paid, she said he may have stolen too. Definitely Grace is also stealing [at shop where she works], she said. Desi's mother used to pay boy working at chigayo 12.000MK (but still he stole and she fired him). Gertrude thinks this boy will get more then husband of Elube and Levison (who do hard labor 5 days a week for 6000/month) because it is easy to steal, to keep him from stealing. But in shop also easy to steal (Grace, making 4000 for 5 days a week (shop open 6 days a week, not Saturday because owner is Seventh Day Baptist, Grace to CCAP on Sunday). When Gertrude was ill at time of tel buro, she asked friend to run BS for her and receive payment for it. At tobacco season Gertrude used to make 800 even 1000MK per day, but this girl came back with only 200 or 300. Others told her that there had been a lot of customers, so the girl had been stealing. When doing a BS it is better to do it yourself, because if you employ someone he will surely steal from you, Gertrude concluded.

Yesterday Grace came back walking because bike had to stay with owner to go to church in weekend. But a boy escorted her home, she said, unclear whether it was the owner or indeed just a boy.

husband Amila came back this morning after having disappeared again for some time after selling firewood to Gertrude. Said he went to his home vlg near [nearest tradingcenter].

Gertrude greeted a girl on road: had talked to her once at [small crossroads market] and had seen her too when Pamela and Gettie were fighting over Gettie's husband. Gertrude had used hands, Pamela her shoe. First in bedroom, then in living room, until men came to part them. Then Gertrude told husband to follow her home which he first refused, but then people from this village told him to go, since this is not his vlg, he has no house here, they all know he is married to Gettie and even has a child at their house. Then he went. Shortly after Pamela came out of her house, asking where her child had gone. People commented that she has no shame, probably is used to this since it happened
several times now already. The next day she had left, also the man had left, taking some of the items in the house and selling half their cotton, for a low price since official buying had not yet started. They are said to have gone to Ntcheu, but they money he found selling cotton must have been just enough for their transport. He planned to start BS there. People said that Pamela will be finding new men at Ntcheu, doing the same again, cheating this one.

Chief Mudzi A came to say that we will meet at Mr Ntawanga’s for group picture, because his wife doesn’t like chatting to some women, so those women may not want to come to his compound...

May 31, Sunday

This community does not want to be understood/doorgelicht, leven zo ongeveer van het manipuleren van ontwikkelingsprojecten en elkaar, hebben er baat bij als die sluier bedekt blijft, willen niet ontmaskerd worden. Niet vereerd dat ik geïnteresseerd iin hen ben, maar eerder bezorgd (e.g. HH lijst die niet blijkt te kloppen etc).

Sofia (harvesting a bit of cotton in GVH’s field) told Gertrude this morning that her husband said he will come today to discuss renting a house for her at Liwonde turnoff (conveniently located for his BS in second hand clothes) to live there together. “Ever since I told him those angry words over the phone he has been treating me much better,” she said (see May 5, Gertrude’s notes). She earlier commented that he is thinner than before and suggested this may be because he is worried about how to take care of all his children (4 with her, 1 with new wife). He likes women and has been travelling a lot for his BS, so he may have other wives (with children) to take care of too... Did not mention the disease as possible cause of his weightloss. [Aug 20: volgens mij zei Gertrude hier nog achteraan, uit schaamte, insinueerde wel disease, saying he likes women, travels a lot].

After Moyo wa thanzi survey women at borehole laughed about how they had lied, about having more children in family and less maize harvested. Chief Mudzi B complained that it is now happening too often that people come to ask questions and then leave again, without any benefit for the respondents. They should now be bothering other villages. Every HH was questioned (where they found someone at home), but Gertrude not because not from this village and doing research. The interviewers didn’t want her to see the questions.

Rosemary still harvesting cotton in GVH’s field.

Village registration book: husband of Elube is Chilemba, born 1964. GVH born 1940, all her children were born at home. husband Jasmine 1961, Jasmine 1951. Jasmine said she was still very young when her parents decided she should be married to this one. In interview she said they married in 1964 -maybe married to another first? Or mistakes in book? First child registered 1973, last 1987.

Amila chased her husband when he came back yesterday. Sofia had asked whether they had shared their maize harvest, but Amila answered that he had not helped her on the field so she didn’t give him anything.

GVH came to greet, had been harvesting cotton since very early. Now going to cook breakfast. Just working alone, g’children are not helping her, she complained. Cannot tell them to help her, they know it is Sunday today, so no school, so they can think by themselves that they can come and help her... Wants to harvest all her cotton before selling so that she finds a lot of money at once. Plans to keep come of it to hire ganyu, because she is alone now (and has more land!), wants to buy more
maize and build a new house because this one is getting very old now.

Chief Mudzi B passed to greet and asked how the picture taking went yesterday at Mudzi A. Sorry, she had told all women at Mudzi B to come, but some said they didn’t just want to come for a picture. Ah kwathu, sighed Salika (=chief), we always expect to receive something. Sorry to have disturbed you, said Gertrude.

Went to GVH to give back books, asked her when first people came to live here. Her mother came as a child with her parents, GVH born here in 1940, differences between now and past? No, everything still the same, I probed: same number of people? No less people. First chief was M., then chief Ch., then Bakili Muluzi became president and sub-TA [small crossroads market] was created with new chief. After that people were split in again in smaller groups and one of them with a chief Mudzi B. Two men were chiefs here before this one got installed when her breasts were still small. The previous chiefs, the uncle of her mother, had chosen her, when he died, she took his place. There were older people he could have chosen too, but they were not as closely related to him as she was. Her task was to give people some of the land that belonged to her family/chief-tainship when people got married. In past they used to get a big plot, now may be only 2 or 3 acres to build their house and grow their crops.

She [GVH] would always give the land to the wife, because that one would bare the children and stay at the same place while the man might move away to other places. But that happened less often in the past, not like now that men are just getting married everywhere. This changed when Kamuzu Banda came into power he gave only power to men, not to women. Then women were not able anymore to tell their husbands to how to behave.

In past children used to respect their elders, but now not anymore. Her parents sat down with their children in the evenings and told them how to behave properly. That is why her husband has never taken a stick to beat her, because she always remembered how to respect him, how to behave properly. She [GVH] tried to give her children the same kind of upbringing, but they are not listening to her, saying that that was the past, now there is freedom. Bingu also said it again, that there is now freedom of speech.

Girlfriend of Kingsley sat on our mat at GVH’s to greet us. Gertrude asked her when she came: yesterday, had spent the night. In which of the 3 houses of the compound, asked Gertrude, ah you ask too many questions, and then she left.

Kingsley hasn’t finished harvesting his cotton, will only start selling after he harvests everything. Kondwani harvested everything and will sell on Monday.

Vanessa has not finished harvesting but will start selling on Monday.
GVH said that because people are not following what their ancestors used to do and advise them, many children are falling ill.

Chief Mudzi B was cooking on one of those mud stoves that concern universal gave her. One day many women (incl Venesi and Vanessa) from different villages went to Bruce village and came back with a stove. Weren’t taught, just receive, says chief. She finds it works very well, using less firewood which is becoming difficult to find these days, so she says many women will want to have such a stove, even if they have to pay 500mk for it, but will rather go to learn to make one themselves, she thinks.

Asked mr Ntawanga about the CBO (see Gertrude’s notes) were told by DC to form a CBO otherwise they will not receive anything through development projects. Handouts and projects are only done through “CBO”. That day all the members contributed 100mk each inorder to register their CBO at district level. Is different from the VDC, the CBO is only there to receive whatever “they” (boma, organisations) want to give, while the VDC can go to ask for things, e.g a borehole. Mudzi A and the other villages under group Mudzi B asked for a borehole already 3 years ago, but nothing up till now, only at Mudzi B a borehole was built, Gertrude told me earlier that originally the borehole would be built at Mudzi A, but then the GVH got angry and demanded it to be built near her house.

The problem here is that in the past years there was no MP from this area in the Malawian parliament, who knows what is needed here, there were from other parts of Balaka, but there are enough boreholes there. But since this year there is an MP from this area, so hopefully things will get better. Why have all those development projects not stopped the poverty here, what’s wrong with those projects?

Many only stay at Balaka boma, don’t reach the villages, only FIDP reached here and we really benefited from that because they gave us goats. But then they didn’t give you the cement and malata (iron sheets) that they promised, I said (when we arrived we found him making a grass roof on the goat khola). Yes, that’s the problem of us Malawians the ones who received these items at district level must have decided to keep them for themselves instead of bringing the handouts and money to the villages they use it to buy a motorcycle or car for themselves.

Had earlier said that the problem here is that few people are educated, so difficult to run for MP. I told him to make sure that one of his children gets enough education to make it to MP to help this area. He and his wife laughed and said he will try, he will encourage his son not to marry young but stay in school. But it takes a lot of money to run for MP, he added, Gertrude answered that as the boy gets wiser he will find ways to get this money. About projects: the ones at district level only send resources to where their relatives are.
Chikondi had come to see if the baby suits were ready, wants to put them tomorrow, going to see a friend in early morning hours, to be back in time to sell her cotton at [small crossroads market]. Husband of Elube will not start buying until Tuesday, husband can not help her transport all the cotton to [small crossroads market] because “banja latha” [marriage ended]. He told her last week that he is not coming back anymore, he waited for her to give birth, the babies are now 6 months, from now on it’s her own responsibility. She didn’t object or try to change his mind, just accepted, “what could she do?” why didn’t he wait for you to sell your cotton? Has his own…. Doesn’t want to remarry ever again. Last year she was working on her field while pregnant, coming home to cook for him. Won’t do it again, will take care of herself now. Even his parents told her that she better takes care of herself, stop the marriage with this man. Is not afraid of that other women will mistreat her like before, because they all know about the behaviour of this man. That he used to beat her after drinking beer. Pointed out the door that was lacking a part- he mined it, also forced away one of the corner poles on which the roof was resting.

I asked her [Chikondi] about the proper behaviour for men/husbands - she found the question hard to understand, probably too normal for her, never actively/explicitely thought about it. After some reformulations she said that a good man builds and maintains the house, and starts working on the field again soon after harvest to make new ridges. She couldn’t think of another male ‘udindo’ but for women it’s: taking care of the children, preparing food for her husband, welcome visitors, fetch water and firewood, I helped her. Taking care of the ill, she then added, sharing things with others when do people say that somebody is a good wife?). No nkhanza, e.g letting young children fetch water.

She [Chikondi] then gossiped with Gertrude that Pamela had come back again, to give 700mk to the chief to show that she is really married now. The man went to his house to collect the cotton to sell tomorrow but found that Gertrude had taken everything, all maize etc. she had even cut off the cotton plants that were not ripe yet to destroy them, went back to her mother. As payment for the fact that she left school for him.

Thokozani came by around 1pm with baby on back and big bucket with small, mainly unripe tomatoes for sale. We bought 12 small ones for 20mk.

Chikondi said about Pamela and new husband that he doesn’t know her behaviour, and she doesn’t know about his, for that matter.

I asked Gertrude what happened that Livia is not coming as often as before anymore, but Gertrude said she didn’t know, may be just busy with other things. But I read in her notes that app 10 days ago she told on Livia twice to Phingi...

Kondwani, Chisoni, Esnart and Ada came. Kondwani reprimanded Ada and later Tinenenji
for only coming now because they wanted their hair to braided, “while on other days you just let Gertrude knit here alone” Tinenenji soon left, because Gertrude busy with Chisoni’s hair and Ada also waiting. I asked where they are going tomorrow that they all want their hair braided but that only made them shy (betrapt).

Pamela also came, plans to stay here with new husband, son very ill, says Gertrude, insinuating that this is because Pamela is sleeping with other man than his father. Pamela said that Molly is not speaking to her (but probably also other way around), saying that Pamela is a prostitute. Pamela plans to go to grandmother in other village to solve this issue between her and Molly. Pamela escorted Grace’s new boyfriend, joking that she will warn his wife so that Grace can experience the same thing that happened to herself. Nola is not happy with Grace’s boyfriend, doesn’t want her to marry someone who already has a wife. Venesi told Grace to tell Nola that she doesn’t have enough money to take care of herself. Grace’s bf wants her to stop working at the shop because he knows the owner likes women, and that he is trying his best to find enough money for her. Today he gave her money to go to hair salon in Balaka (app 500mk, including chemicals), but Grace refuses to stop at the shop, because the boyfriend does not give her enough. Grace works with the sister of the wife of the owner because he expects many customers selling their cotton at [small crossroads market].

Chisoni and Esnart said that only few people will start BS now, most will just wait until their money starts to run out, then think of starting a BS. They will just be eating their cotton money. Indeed Jasmine & Innocent only talked about buying cloghes etc after selling cotton not about starting a BS.

Husband of Amila told her to stop her sugarcane BS, but she refused, saying that no one takes care of her, he doesn’t help her, this is her only way to find money for soap, can’t stop, he should just go.

Kondwani took a jersey knitted by Gertrude, will pay on Tuesday after selling her cotton. Afraid that other women will be taking it when they find money. Chisoni did not plant cotton, couldn’t manage alone, she says. Ada will not sell her cotton tomorrow because there will be many people, but is very happy that soon she will have a lot of money.

Kingsley has a lot of cotton, the women commented, his girlfriend will be enjoying a lot. They were surprised that GVH had invited the girl to spend the night, which they saw as encouraging Kingsley to marry her even though she knows that the girl has also relationships with some boys at her school.

Kingsley told us this morning that cotton prices will go up towards the end of the selling season, when few people have cotton left (buyers fighting over the last bits).
Rosa came to give another 100mk for her school uniform jersey. 300 of 400 is now paid off. Was on her way to shop to buy ingredients for mandasi that mother wants to start selling.

Kondwani said her brother came back from M. village where he got married. Wife had been angry with him for not giving money for ndiwo, but taking her groundnuts to serve as ndiwo (while they had worked on field together, according to his story). So decided to divorce, but may be he has another girlfriend, guessed Kondwani (but then you’d think he’d be going there in stead of home village). He got nsima for lunch from chief Mudzi B, Kondwani will feed him for dinner. Soon there will be some discussions to decide on divorce, he may be afraid to go to girlfriend before these discussions, says Gertrude.

Father of Ada’s child is coming to chat with her more often now, staying up till 7pm after which Ada escorts him out of village, going back to the wife he left her for. Soon you will have another child, the women laughed at her. No no, defended Ada, Gertrude thinks she may be afraid to admit to the other women that she wants to marry him again. He will probably move in with her again when his other wife gives birth, I laughed, pang’onopang’ono I am understanding how things work here.

Women laughed that Innocent, Sofia, Jasmine and Thokozani are playing cards at Jasmine’s house. For 1, 5, 20mk per game. After selling cotton they will be playing for 50mk per game, they prospected, we heard Innocent yell at Trinity that she has to wash the plates. Women disapproved that Talina now has to do all HH chores because Innocent is too busy playing cards (but I saw Innocent fetching water this morning and she cooked lunch together with Trinity).

When Gertrude asked Kondwani why Julia divorced her husband and then moved back to him after first having another man’s child, she just shrugged ‘kaya’ [don’t know], little gossiping about people from Mudzi A.

Esnart complained that 150mk is a lot for borehole contribution (per HH per year), at other places it is just 50mk.

Levison has been drunk the whole weekend, Thokozani said he left this morning without washing his body and hadn’t seen him since. He said he would wash wherever he went to, had really been flirting with Saibi some timeago, sitting together, Gertrude heard him say “I will touch your breasts” and made movement to do so, S pushed him away, saying that Hamra was there, both laughing and enjoying.

In early night many men voices, probably celebrating that soon they have money.
Monday June 1: Start of cotton selling!

Husband of Elube will start buying tomorrow - his fence is not ready yet. At borehole women said they will start selling tomorrow because today there will be a lot of people at [small crossroads market]. Both chief Mudzi A and Nyamwale said they want to buy 2 bags of maize with their cotton money.

Levison and son of Elube discussed that at B. village both China and NASFAM have already started buying, they will go there to check. Sofia - harvesting cotton in GVH’s field - yells to Levison that he shouldn’t be moving around but stay at home because he has a wife there. He yells back that Goldy (daughter Venesi) says he impregnated her, and that Livia had said the same, jokes that he better go buying some clothes for Goldy and that he’ll be having many children like this. Evelin and Esnart (one way to borehole) joke back that may be these girls want him, and therefore say these things [gemoedelijk].

Sofia’s husband usually comes around 7pm, but yesterday did not show up as he promised.

Emra also waits with selling her cotton till tomorrow, to first find out about the prices that will be offered at different places.

At 9am we went to [small crossroads market], but found nothing happening there yet, two big places where fenced with grass, one not yet finished. The buyers have arrived, said Grace (who was sitting in shop with boyfriend standing outside chatting with her), but the money not yet. We saw nobody on road carrying cotton, everybody apparently waiting until they hear the actual buying has started.

Gave picture to tomato woman who said that last Thursday was already quite busy with sellers, although few buyers. Shoes, clothes, tomatoes, sugarcane, mandasi and much more. From this week on sellers will be coming from far. Last year [cotton] buying had already started by now, may be delay because of elections. Emily had said because of unexpected last rains, that make the cotton heavier.

Venesi’s boyfriend was at bicycle repair shelter, with other young men, just hanging and chatting - may be he is one of the buyers?

Went to Evelin with some questions on her expenditure book. Found her outside with kids cleaning nkhwani from her field. Washed clothes drying on line, plus very luxurious big blanket, the ones which Blessings sold from SA for 8000mk. Surely Evelin hasn’t paid 8000mk for it, I assumed, ah no, may be from ex-husband, guessed Gertrude. I asked her why she had given 10mk.
to the tree project, she giggled and said she had just written it, but not true. Hadn’t written down the 8000 she received from me, nor how she spent it, on that day the handwriting was very different, but when I asked about she just said she decided to change her handwriting for one day. I wanted to know why she had lied about the contribution for the tree project (says that nobody ever pays this), but Gertrude said we better leave it. She asked why we hadn’t come to church yesterday, ulesi [laziness] answered Gertrude, two priests had come and many people, some even had to stand outside the packed church. She wanted us to stay and chat, but said she’ll come tomorrow so Gertrude can apply “American” chemical in her hair.

Continued to old Ayami in Mudzi B with some general questions on differences between now and past. Talked while we shelled nandolo, Jeneti came back from her field, had now finished harvesting cotton. After the old woman we went to talk with Jeneti about her HIV infection. I told her that people had been saying she is infected and that I’d like to ask some questions about this, but don’t know if she is willing to be open about it, if not no problem at all. She said it is ok, she knows we are doing research and is happy that we felt free to come and ask her personally rather than through other people. Decided to go for testing because “kudwaladwala” says that the father of (her daughter) Ellesi encouraged her to go for testing, although he hadn’t say anything about his own status. When she heard she is HIV positive she knew that she would be getting medication and get stronger again. Indeed looks very good now, happy and fat, no more sores but beautiful skin. Can work the whole day without getting tired and sleeps well again too. She first didn’t tell anyone in the village, but people knew because in the beginning she had to go every Friday to Balaka hospital to be informed about how to take care of her self.

There she was also prepared that people would be talking and laughing about her but she should just leave them, not take notice. She had to take a witness the first time who had to answer some questions too. Her mother (Ayami) said she couldn’t manage to go to Balaka, so Jeneti asked Elube. Gertrude commented later that “Elube went with her to hospital but didn’t think of getting tested herself”, how do you know she didn’t get tested, I asked, but filled in myself that if she had, she would probably look healthier, less weak and thin - and gossips about it would surely have spread. Jeneti says that although in beginning people outside her family (who didn’t have a problem with her status) talked and laughed about her behind her back, by now everybody talks to her again, come to chat with her. People laugh, but they don’t know whether they themselves will get cancer or TB, she said. Says that people laugh and gossip just as much about patients with cancer or TB as people with HIV. Laugh until they go to the hospital to get tested themselves for anything. Says she told her previous husband, but he didn’t say anything, thinks it is better for her not to marry again, because then she will have to give birth to many children and she will just be spreading the virus. I told her that that need not to be the case, she answered that she heard in the hospital that there are indeed many ways to prevent, “but maybe her husband would not allow her.

Jeneti grow cotton, now wants to hear about the prices offered at the places around us before
selling. With the money she finds she will first have to pay back 2000mk that she borrowed during hunger season. Also wants to buy materials for iron sheet roof, probably will be able to construct next hunger season, when she’ll sell maize for higher price.

Ayami plans to use cotton money for zovala (buying at Balaka = cheaper), zakudya, thumba la chimanga. Asked her about proper behaviour for men/husbands and women/wives, good man: takes care of orphans that he finds in the home, bad: one who doesn’t take care of his wife, and kuyendayenda. She says that in the past people did not move around as much as now. Men would marry only 1 or 2 wives basi; “gender” made this to change, in past a man could tell his wife that she had to do something and she would do it, and vice versa.

Livia came to have her hair braided, Ada too, Kondwani and Ellesi to knit. Discussed that Grace’s boyfriend spent the night at her house, so apparently Grace decided to ignore her grandmother and marry him anyway.

Kondwani said that there are a lot of people at the maize mill, not pounding their maize by hand but paying for it, anticipating that they will soon have a lot of money. She plans to join Amila tomorrow to Luwawadzi to buy sugarcane to sell.

Amila’s husband came and they quarrelled, again he told her to stop BS, but she still refused, saying that she cannot stop and that he should go like she told him to.

Kondwani told that the brother of her ex-husband had come into her bedroom last night, without knocking oim. Checking if she was there with a man, she told him off, saying that she is not married to his brother anymore, that she can marry someone else if she wants to, but that for now she is just with her kids as he can see.

Husband of Julia has been drunk since yesterday, drinking kachasu with Levison.

Ex-husband of Fatima commented to Innocent and Sofia that he now wants a baby boy (from Tinenenji) not another baby girl. Kondwani commented: “why can’t he just marry her?”

Everybody is just waiting for the cotton buying to start, no sign from any buying anywhere yet. Innocent’s father went to [small crossroads market] in afternoon to check, Ellesi said that they usually add a bit of water to their cotton to increase the weight. Kondwani said she didn’t know, this is her first year to grow cotton.

Tuesday June 2
In early morning - Gertrude and I were still in bed - GVH came to bring us several kg’s of the rice she harvested. On her way to bring the same amount to Kondwani, harvested 2, 5 bags and decided to share the half bag among friends and relatives.

Rosemary still harvesting cotton in GVH’s field, now reached behind our toilet.

Chenawe indeed brought one of her orphaned grandchildren after her son died, but the child was just crying and crying, wanting to go back to home village. After some days t let her go, Chenawe back, couldn’t manage.

When Gertrude had to stop secondary school because the one who paid died, her aunt argued that she better move to town. If she would stay in village and work the field others would say: you see, there is no benefit to going to school, so to set good example for others, she decided to take Gertrude to Lilongwe. Other cousins were encouraged to continue school by letting them spend their holidays with her in town.

On Gertrude’s field in Dedza her mother and sister harvested 4 bags of Irish potatoes. Gertrude paid 1000 for ganyu and 500 for fertilizer which mother bought at market. Some people sell subsidized fertilizer in small quantities, e.g 1kg for 100 or even 200mk, lot of profit!

Chikondi went to pay condolences to a friend (hadn’t had time to go to funeral) and brought a basin of ufa.

GVH says maize price now at 2000mk per 50kg. Gertrude expects that as soon as cotton selling starts, price will go up to 2500mk because sellers know that people have money now.

Elube explained that today at 2pm there will be a meeting at [small crossroads market] for all the cotton buyers. The problem is that Bingu told the companies that their price should be at least 75mk/kg, but they are not willing to pay more than 60 or 65mk/kg.

Daughter-in-law of GVH called Gertrude to tell GVH that she has arrived in SA now.

Eveles says nice but collapsed house was built by son [Bicycle maker], he made the bricks himself and built the structure. Was apparently able to buy cement and paint, all looks very professional. All his 6 children were born in that house, some time ago he tried to make it habitable again by putting on grass roof, but was destroyed by winds. The structure where he keeps his bicycle parts and equipment in (and a mat with blankets, I saw when putting back pump) was also beautiful in past, can still see. “AND SHOE MANUFACTURE”, but very damaged, run
Boris came to complain that he has been the one filling in the HH notebook for Evelin [low self esteem, afraid she won’t be able to live up to my expectations? Like [small crossroads market] woman we interviewed, had gedacht dat ze mijn vragen niet zou kunnen beantwoorden, maar viel haar achteraf alles mee], she had promised him some money for it but up to now only gave him 500. yesterday we told her to add the money (8000) that I gave her and how she spent it. He found out about the money (may be she told him to add? Would be quite stupid), and demanded more but she refused. Now he came to ask money from us for his work, but asked us not to tell Evelin because then there would be more fighting. We will just tell her to stop as of now, sometimes she told him how she had spent the money, other days she just told him to just write usual things. This explans why there was so much mention of body lotion, haha, Gertrude now says that Evelin begged Gertrude to help her writing, and they would share the money. Comparing Evelin’s signature on the receipt shows that indeed someone else wrote her HH book. In beginning still her own handwriting, switches March 5. Signatures of other women do resemble the handwriting in their books. Gertrude went to tell Evelin we don’t need more, and get the books back, but Boris had already said that he has the newest notebook and indeed Evelin said she would bring it posachedwa, now cooking (replacing plates without really doing anything). Gertrude sat down and said she’d wait, no please please I want to write about today, will bring it, really. And indeed soon she came to bring it, neatly filled up today by Boris including the 8000 I gave her.

Suset came to say that they will meet with “alangizi akulu” from Rural Finance tomorrow at [small crossroads market]. Didn’t find us at home so asked Jasmine to give us message. Jasmine said “at 9am”, at the same time pointing at the height of the sun around 9am.

Asked woman growing ICRISAT g/nuts and pigeon peasa about these new varieties: she says she likes them. Both higher yielding than the local variety, pigeon pea also early maturing. She expects to be eating the peas that now dry on the plants beginning of August (eating of fresh nandolo already started) while local variety and of August. Has to give back 35kg of g/nuts, Mr Chikombo will come to check if it’s really 35kg and then he will give it to chief who will keep till planting season and distribute to people (hm, I wonder if she will indeed). The rest she intends to eat and sell, harvested almost 5 bags, quite some people have already come to buy some of her g/nuts, but she told them to wait, first wants to repay ICRISAT. No-one of ICRISAT ever came, although they had promised, Mr Chikombo came once, then told her that the yield was not optimal because a lot of sun when she planted (= too little rain). She will plant again next year, hoping harvest will be even better. Did not grow local variety this year, will sell for same price as local variety = 2500/50kg. Especially fish vendors from Mangochi turn- off will be buying, to sell else where for higher price. She thinks they will tell buyers that it is a new, higher yielding variety, because they sell to farmers. The pigeon peas she just received, will not have to pay back, thinks she just received those to plant at the ridges. Will not sell much of it but keep till hunger season, otherwise she will go hungry then. Usually eat in
October, helps them, with dried cassava.

At [nearest tradingcenter] found little going on, no official cotton buyer. At hospital checked the birth register, in last 17 months peak was in August and September, almost double as much as Feb to July. Hence 9 months after hunger season, with smaller peak January this year, but in Feb number of births drops quite dramatically, strange. Seems that beginning of cotton selling or even just before many babies are made.

At [Bicycle maker]'s closed shop a poster was hung saying that “if you choose to stop taking ARVs you reduce the days of your life. Don’t be cheated continue taking ARVs as you were told by doctor”. With picture of a village woman sitting on a mat taking medication, with lichero with masamba next to her. Eveles didn’t know why it was hanging there, nobody else at home.
She had wanted to work on the field (harvesting mawere) but since no-one else would watch the house she decided to stay. Was just sitting, watching ahead, on her head a piece of mosquitonet, also around her waist. Wasn’t using the mosquitonet anyway, so had decided to make it useful.

In morning made pictures of Jeneti in 2 different nice outfits, one with Ellesi. Also Lovely wanted another picture, for her husband, together with Ellesi, I told them to squat down so that I’d have a dark background (grass fence) but Lovely wouldn’t: I'm older than Ellesi, so has to be higher than her. Daughter of Lovely had a beaded collar around waist, just for decoration, said Lovely, to show that it is a girl. Just like holes in ears with us may be? Some women are told to put on something like that by their husbands, who say they like it. Gertrude pointed at some kind of beaded collar around another girls neck and waist, same kind of decoration.

My bike chain kept falling if on trip to [nearest tradingcenter], but [Bicycle maker] not at home. Left bike with husband of Jasmine, she sat in kitchen, children outside on kitchen doorstep, eating fresh boiled nandolo. husband at doorstep of his small house, potato in hand, bowl of nandolo (in peel) next to him. He will fix the bike, he said, Jasmine give me plate of nandolo. In morning I saw daughter of Amila eat a raw sweet potato. Gertrude thinks some not eating nsima because tired of nandolo for ndiwo, or will eat nsima around 2-3 pm.

Yesterday on our way to [small crossroads market] saw family Musitafa with water buckets (twice), so they also fetch water from other place.

Ada and Hilda were eating potato and pumpkin. Sofia was eating pumpkin, Haliday and kids were eating nsima with chicken. Pamela was cooking nsima together with Evelin. Gertrude heard that she had taken her maize to Ntcheu, may be therefore cooking with Evelin?
Many people came for a picture, Esnart said I heard you are taking pictures again and decided to come myself too, because can’t afford 50-60mk for a picture. When Amila came Gertrude asked about the situation with her husband, she had asked him to dig a toilet and build a bafa because it is uncomfortable to have to beg others to make use of theirs and she can’t afford 500 to have somebody do it for her. But he refused, saying she is now doing BS, finds her own money, even demanded her to buy him matemba because tired of masamba. He called her a prostitute, suggested that she wants to get back to her ex-husband, that he was probably the one who encouraged her to do BS.

Most people eating either nandolo for ndiwo, or buy masamba from vendors passing by (10-15mk) or matemba.

Boris came to thank us that we didn’t tell on him to Evelin [Gertrude said not to openly confront her], but requested some money for his work, haha! Told him that this is not our problem, we have stopped paying Evelin now because she is cheating, the material is almost useless (but interesting that and how she cheated, plus still informative about usual forms of income and expenditure), he should fight it out with Evelin if he wants some money for his work. He accepted, smelled drunken with kachasu, said Gertrude surprised.

JPhingi gave her breast to her (granddaughter) Hana (child’s mother Livia to Balaka for tailoring).

June 3

June 3: Mudzi B - [small crossroads market] - Balaka - Lilongwe

Sofia came for some pictures with me, later Phingi came to be photographed picking cotton. Complained about the low prices that are big offered for cotton - exploitation indeed! When I later told Harry and other colleagues at ICRISAT office they disapproved of low prices, comparing the 35 offered with the 75 Bingu had requested to be offered. “And if you think of the production costs of cotton...” Harry Msere said. Jasmine said she better only grow maize next year. The same was later that day said by woman of tea room in [small crossroads market]. Jasmine now has plans to buy a cellphone with her cotton money, and some iron sheets (malata) (and next year more to have enough for the whole roof), and clothes and maize.

Went with Innocent and Livia to Rural Finance meeting at [small crossroads market] on bike. Jasmine and Innocent apply for a loan together, but Innocent is the one actually going through all the hassle to get the loan. But apparently will have to pay off part of it too, because she later said to Gertrude that her new boyfriend will come in handy when paying of the new loan they are getting. Says she intends - and possibly seriously thinks so now - to buy dried fish at the lake and sell at Liwonde turnoff. When we were waiting at [small crossroads market] to see whether the alangizi from RF would indeed come (when we arrived and asked woman of tea room where meeting would be about him, she said she wasn’t sure whether he would really come, someone (who has bike taxi and wants loan too) went to check, later heard through
phone that alangizi was indeed on his way). Had said to meet at 9, but only arrived at 10. Most others also arrived way after 9 - including us bcz of flat tire which we pumped at husband of Magda. Suset was nicely dressed in skirt and blouse (2nd hand) and 1 oorbel. Innocent asked her where she got skirt, she did not elaborately answer. Both girls had the same small hand purse, which Innocent had bought on behalf of Suset in Balaka for 100MK, and then decided to buy herself the exact same one. Innocent was envisioning taking a cellphone from the purse, and held the imaginary phone against her ear, giggling with the prospect - possibly with cotton money.

Gertrude asked Livia about new boyfriend, Livia first denied. Gertrude then cheated her saying that she had seen Livia in Balaka chatting with a boy (but actually had heard through Sofia). Livia then admitted, explaining that mother had told her not to marry the rasta, because he smokes etc, “won’t help you.” Then she went to buy a new chitenje in town, but only could pay 300, promising seller she’d come with remaining 200 later. She says he then proposed to instead be his girlfriend. She agreed “so that she has someone to help her pay back the new RF loan” she justified to Gertrude. Gertrude asked why Livia just accepts all proposals from all men? “iii, auntie Getu…” Livia just laughed.

Women gossiped (who?) that Ellesi’s proposer from SA had come again, “but empty-handed, didn’t even bring her anything from SA!” Also said disapprovingly that he is much older than she, “even older than my husband” Pamela remarked. Mother is said to have responded very happy again to fact that man showed up after all, calling him her son-in-law. On our way to Balaka we met Ellesi (so again not to school today) and boy (not old!) walking. Gertrude concludes that she must definitely have accepted his proposal, otherwise you don’t escort someone all the way to Balaka on foot. Gertrude also noticed that Ellesi was wearing a new chitenje and hand bag ("but the blouse I knew already"), so boy probably did not come empty-handed at all.

Still at Kima’s house (to talk to Suset and have my tire pumped up) a young woman greeted us: mollig, in tight jeans, putting on a lot of make up. Young sister of Suset who lives in town, and “just came by to greet relatives in vlg.” Innocent said that the girl asked her before and now to join her to town. Innocent was pregnant the first time, so couldn’t, and this time declined. When I asked why she said there is no benefit to go to town. I laughed and said there clearly is a benefit, look at the girl, she is fat, has new clothes, cellphone, even make up! But Innocent said she is rather cheated while staying at home with parents than move around with men in town. I later asked Gertrude whether she thinks people look up or down to such a girl who is clearly doing well, but through disapprovable behavior. Difficult to answer, but eventually said that people will definitely think she is a prostitute, because “they know her behavior” (the jeans, make up etc, maybe used to move around with many boys when still in vlg too).

Chatting at tea room, waiting for alangizi to show up (again complaining about cotton prices, better just plant maize next year) a man passed by with 2 others carrying some katundu for him. Adult daughter of owner of tea room (owner lives somewhere else) told mother that the man had come week ago to find a wife, had proposed someone but her parents had refused. He was now on his way to the parents of another girl.

When the alangizi arrived on motorbike we all sat down in shade behind tea room. Alangizi and very old man (chief [small crossroads market]) sat down in small bench, others on or around bamboo mat. 6 women, 3 men (besides chief, who was just there for formality, not to get loan) who wanted to apply for loan. Alangizi first asked the name of the new club (Ti-something-e) and looked at the
torn out notebook page that secretary Suset handed over to him, with the names of the trencher, chair etc and the 10 members, including nr of people that were not there (Teleza, husband of Elube, Mr Tulipesi) asked each one of them about the kind of BS they are doing and how big a loan they would like to get: First woman makes mandasi (how many bags of flower do you use per week, where do you sell, how big is profit); next sells beans and rice; owner of tea room (incl selling of scones - which indeed were sold quite a lot while we where there, a 14MK); Suset mowa and plans to buy second hand clothes at Balaka, selling at [large commercial estate] secondary school; Livia selling fish at lake to sell at Liwonde turn off; Innocent sell rice; 1 man tailor (kusoka ndi machine); another sells cooking oil and paraffin; 1 man has bike taxi (says he makes 800-1000MK per day (?!) & wants to either go around villages to buy maize at cheap price, or otherwise buy another bike and employ a cyclist. The loans they hoped to get ranged from 10.000 to 30.000MK. Livia had said: 10.000 or 20.000. What is it, 10 or 20? the alangizi replied. 20.000, mumbled Livia. Overall I felt the loan appliers seemed quite comfortable/confident to talk about their BS and loan wishes. I wonder though how much they indeed intend to plan the loan just for BS, like Suset who had earlier said to us she wants to build a kitchen with it. The alangizi asked whether they had loans before, half of them had received loans from CUMO before. He asked each one whether they had already fully repaid that loan, which they all confirmed. He then explained about the RF rules: first time borrowers can get a loan from 20.000 up to 50.000, rente is 33%. Second time borrowers can get 50.000-100.000MK, rente 32%. Continuing to lowest possible rent 30%. No matter the size of your loan, pay back takes place monthly over period of 1 year. But before getting loan, borrowers have to come up with a part of the pay back money already. If one wants to borrow 20.000, must first bring RF 4/5000 MK. This money is then taking of the total amount to be paid back, which is 26.600MK, so that the monthly pay back amount is around 22.000 divided by 12. Then there is also an insurance which the borrowers have to pay, which amounts to 116MK if one takes a 20.000MK loan. Group has to make its own set off rules (like paying fine when not attending meeting etc) and show them to alangizi. But I don’t see why the borrowers have to form a group (10- 15 members should be size of group), because after individually having repaid a loan one can get a new one - if Gertrude understood well. The man had started out by saying that the members all have to know each other, know where they all live and know what kind of assets each one has, eg a goat, so that they can take these items in case someone is not able to pay back. The members first have to follow a course, which should take app 2-3 weeks, twice a week 1,5 hours. After this course a supervisor of the alangizi will come to ask the members some questions to test their understanding of the course. If they pass, they’ll get the loan, otherwise more info meetings first (CUMO did not have this approach, said Gertrude - but should check!). The group (but especially chief) decided together that they will meet with alangizi on Tuesdays and Thursdays at 7.30AM. One of the men then said streng that they should all really be there at 7.30, not like today, agree to meet at 9, then not arrive till 10. After all the explaining and calculating of examples (with big calculator) the chief urged the alangizi to come with the money quickly so that these people can make use of the cotton selling and thus the lot of money going around, adding that fortunately this group has many young women who can easily find the start up money by going to Balaka and find some men to give them the money (!). People laughed and clapped at his remarks.

When Gertrude read Concern Universal’s Energy Saving Project doc she was surprised that Malawi was only 13th poorest country in world (indeed she earlier could only think of limited nr of countries in world).
Man chatted with Gertrude in minibus to Lilongwe, showing off about his plans to build own house, was at college, have lot of money, now working at Escom, invited to work at Botswana, playing with “nice cellphone with camera”. Eventually asked her number, she wrote down indeed, but cheated, gave wrong number. But not refusing...

Jasmine asked Gertrude what cotton is used for. To make clothes, Gertrude answered.

Yesterday at the meeting at [small crossroads market] one man said he will be paying 30mk per kg, but then he was thrown stones at, and he ran away. That was end of the meeting, it’s goog to stop growing cotton now, we expected to get a lot of money, but they just cheated us, Jasmine complained.

June 10, Wednesday

After lowering their cell phone prices to 1500mk, zain got 2000.000 more subscribers - may be that’s why their network has so mainly problems now, (Monja said).

Gertrude often breaths as if she is near the fire.

Amila said her husband is now making a toilet and bafa.

Hoped to attend Adult school at Mudzi A, but Ms Ntawanga said it is everyday except Wednesdays, at African Continent Church near Serena.

Mr Ntawanga said that he had gone to the FIDP office in Balaka and now received 6 bags of cement for the floors of 4 khola’s in Mudzi A. The iron sheets will still come, but the villagers have to provide trees and nails, “because they received goats to be able to buy these kind of little thing”. He has quite many goats, including young ones, between 7 and 10. About cotton, he said he went to ask and had been explained that last year cotton was taxed (msonkho) 10%, this year it is 17.5%. Therefore companies refuse to pay as much as last year, otherwise there will be no benefit for them. Now a lot of quarrelling about the price, probably farmers will end up selling for 20 or even 15mk/kg, Mr Ntawanga says pessimistically.

Jasmine had said that by this time last year, they had already spent all their cotton money. Sell and go to Balaka immediately to spend, within 2-3 days all the money is gone. At [large commercial estate] 40mk was offered justifying that they would not make much profit otherwise, selling elsewhere for 70mk. But now prices go down everywhere, Mr Ntawanga says, as the rumor spreads that the companies may not pay more than 20mk/kg. Gov advises that maize prices should go up to 50mk/kg.
Son of Hamra is really serious about building his house. Burnt and started building yesterday, all walls outside are already halfway up! Will make 3 rooms: 1 to sit in, 1 for sleeping, 1 to keep stuff. Wants to finish quickly so that he can start clearing his land [wow, he is serious!] Just like Victoria and Gertrude say about men & BS. What a difference with e.g. Livia, who is just awaiting gifts from lovers, which she then also partly spends on snacks], using clay between the bricks. Helped by his younger brother, husband of Filimona.

Door of Sofia’s house moved to Innocent’s new house by son of Dora.

Jasmine says people come to her for traditional medicine and sometimes it helps them. She doesn’t know whether people may say she is a witch. Clearly bit shocked by question, difference between sing’anga and mfiti (Gertrude used mfiti): mfiti tries to kill people while sing’anga tries to undo the mfiti’s spell, but she is not sing’anga, never went far to learn for it. Just got ill herself and was cured by sing’anga and asked her curer to teach her a bit about the trees and plants. But real sing’anga goes far to learn and fetch the traditional medicines.

Her brother had come to sell some traditional medicines around here, also went to bring some to Jasmine’s son (husband of Sofia) in Balaka. He told Gertrude he has medicines for getting employed, proposed, more customers in BS, she didn’t see anybody from here buy. Jasmine commented on Vanessa not using mud stove: Anangofuna-[just decided not to use it]. Jasmine did not receive but says she wants to try making one herself.

Brother of Kondwani is still here, but will discuss about marriage/divorce today, Gertrude heard at borehole.

Poster against AIDS in tearoom [small crossroads market] was received during meeting held at [small crossroads market] and hung just for decoration.

Livia said giggling that she wants Gertrude to braid her hair today, because she’ll be going to Balaka mawa [tomorrow].

I asked husband of Naima whether girls sometimes propose to men. Ah often, he answered, for example himself, 2 women asked him why he wasn’t proposing to them, why he just stayed at home with his wife. But he replied he doesn’t want them, and that it’s not good to propose other women when married. Koma zikutika [but it happens], but not all girls, only some. Son of Elube confirmed: zoona [true]….

Boys coming to see the pictures I had printed discussed that tomorrow at [large commercial estate] and [small crossroads market] 78 or 80 mk/kg will be offered for cotton. One boy wanted the picture of Amila and him, all
laughed because Amila has eyes closed “as if he is drunk of kachasu!” and they looked like a couple. Boy is young brother of Kingsley, Kingsley also came to greet, had the 2 sons of Sofia on back of his bike for fun.

2647 Evelin came to have hair braided, so far no hard feelings about stopping with HH book, it seems.

2648 Women borrowing money from Esnart: Gertrude says “it was during njala, so Amila eg used the money to buy food. Jasmine probably used for the zigumu BS she then had.

2649 Evelin does not receive support from her relative in SA.

2650 Pamela’s brother once sent her money for fertilizer, after hearing about her having been caught red-handed with husband of Gertrude, Venesi’s son says he will not support her, only mother and girlfriend.

2651 Livia came to flash boyfriend and laughed a lot with Gertrude about brother of Jasmine who has been staying with Jasmine for some days now after arranging the ceremony at J. village for Innocent’s deceased sister. He comes from Mangochi and has been selling traditional medicine eg yesterday at Balaka. He sent Jasmine to propose to chief Mudzi B who accepted immediately. He then went to chat with her after coming back from Balaka, and gave 200mk. She was happy and said that it is cold these days, needs a warm top… Livia also said that chief Mudzi B may have accepted after seeing that he has a nice bike and nice cloths, thinking he has a lot of money. He plans to go to Balaka tomorrow together with Innocent to buy chief Mudzi B a packet of sugar, some ndiwo and a warm top. He says he wants to put her up in a house in Balaka, where he can be doing BS and spend several weeks with his wife in Mangochi and other weeks with this new wife in Balaka. He likes fact that he will have two wives from now on. Livia commented that chief Mudzi B just accepts all offers she gets, but when pregnant is soon left by all those men.

2652 Livia flashed boyfriend in Balaka (china shop) as he requested but he didn’t call back. If he will, she asked Gertrude to tell him she’ll come at 9 am tomorrow. She is a bit scared though, because both this one and the chitenje seller stay at the same neighbourhood in Balaka (near railway crossing, near ADMARC). This boy really urged her to come, has prepared something for her, his brother is coming too.

2653 Livia is confused about the 2 families intertwining now: brother of Jasmine is (indirectly) related to Sofia (wife of his nephew) and now wants to marry someone who is (indirectly) related to Sofia too (because chief Mudzi B is related to GVH: GVH’s elder sister gave birth to chief Mudzi B). Livia doesn’t know how this will work out, whether it can be accepted.
Just like upset about GVH in relationship with relative of daughter-in-law.

Often “uncle” and “achimwene” are used both to refer to same relative (both Boris and Kondwani about the old man who divorced and temporarily moved in with her).

Aisha said she had been away when “I was making pictures again”. Amila had also said she heard “I was making pictures again” and therefore came to have one taken too. This rumour probably started when I went to take picture of Jeneti.

When Gertrude went to pick her bike at the DADO’s office in Balaka somebody was just on his way out with her bike at 4.30- knocking off. Felt ashamed and said he just wanted to buy something at the market. Her pedal was broken off again, “sorry sorry”, the man said, “it happened when I just went to the market to buy something.

Thursday June 11

Livia came and told Gertrude that mother was angry with her for not wanting to teach her how to operate a cell phone, accusing Livia of being jealousy with Phingi’s phone. Livia says she only sent mother to Gertrude because she doesn’t know very well herself. Then her mother told her to take Hana with her to Balaka today, but boyfriend doesn’t know she has children. Asked Talina to watch Hana today, but she refused, now Livia will try to have a friend of her in Balaka take care of the child.

Daughter of Alma has been going to SA last month to buy items for sale in Malawi. Went together with a friend who did same BS, that woman found a boyfriend in SA who bought her some of the items she sold in Malawi. She then divorced her husband in Malawi, because the boyfriend could provide her with the things she needed and wanted. Alma’s daughter wanted to follow her friend’s example, but Alma convinced her to stay with her husband, who had been with her for quite some years now. Kondwani, Sofia and another woman from Mudzi B told Gertrude this story. Women commented that they don’t understand why Alma’s daughter would divorce, because they have a nice house and a car, she just looks theway she looks because of him, she has everything she could want…

GVH came to bring a lot of thobwa, on her way to field to get some nandolo for ndiwo. She looks fatter, Gertrude says: may be she went for blood testing, just like her son (had recently bought milk for him, “because he is on ARV’s now,” said Gertrude. Wants him to get strong, he is indeed getting better now).
I asked why Emra was ordered to pay a chicken and 5 mk: because of sleeping with Ndaba. But why did Pamela and Tinemenji not have to pay similar fines after being caught red-handed? Pamela because she paid to marry the man, and about Tinemenji no official complaint was made. But GVH will go there to demand either money or a chicken for being pregnant without husband, also to Goldy, because they set a bad example. The DC had called all chiefs to [small crossroads market] to instruct them that impregnating without marrying should be punished by paying 1000 mk. The man should pay, but if it is unclear who did it, the woman will have to pay. If not, and the child dies then a grave will not be dug until the penalty is paid. Chief Mudzi B should be the one to find out from pregnant women like Tinemenji and Goldy who is the owner of the child and then go to him to get the money.

With Tinemenji it is not necessary to ask about impregnater, because they were caught red-handed, but for Goldy, chief Mudzi B should have brought together the parents of Goldy and Levison and find out the truth about the matter, but because chief Mudzi B is friends with both parents, she just leaves it. Now GVH will have to do it.

Gertrude thinks it is true that GVH’s son at J. village is HIV positive, because: GVH says he is getting strong again now, and Sofia said that he used to have many girlfriends and wives.

Son of Sofia came along with GVH and felt very lucky when he found two left behind potatoes in one of our ridges where we had already harvested.

Gertrude saw ex-husband of Gettie walk from Mudzi B towards [tiny crossroads market] yesterday morning, coming back around lunch time, leaving again around 4 pm. Sofia saw Gettie at her home village when passing by on way to a funeral. Man told Sofia he is not working now, ashamed, will start in August again, when third term starts.

Gertrude encouraged many women, especially Innocent and Kondwani but also others, to knit shoes, chipewa, jerseys etc and give to Gertrude because people come here to the house to buy. But no-one ever come to sell something [low self esteem?]. Innocent often said she was making something for sale, but later said she had been joking. Chisoni borrowed 4 balls of thread from Gertrude to make a poncho for sale. Came to ask what price to ask, Gertrude advised her to ask 600 mk. Chisoni wanted to sell for more, make more profit. But Gertrude told her no-one will buy, can only make big profit when making and selling many poncho’s.

Innocent is now doubting to take the Rural Finance loan, fearing that she won’t be able to pay back during hunger season when people will be eating just relish even without tomatoes, not even having 10 mk for fish. Therefore asked at RF meeting whether they also
have to pay back during the months when people are working in the field. Alangizi said yes, Innocent thinks of her mother, who faced problems paying back the CUMO loan, leading her to wonder whether they will not struggle this time too. Even Jasmine herself was doubting whether she should continue, may be better start a BS with the money she finds after selling cotton, expecting app 10,000mk. said: ndikuopa. Gertrude encouraged them to take the loan, saying 2000mk is not much to have to pay back each month, can manage if they are serious, go to all the market days.

People think there will be more suffering in the coming hunger season, because many grow a lot of cotton, thinking that they will buy extra maize with their cotton money. Many also started selling their maize right after harvest, rationalizing that they will buy extra maize after selling their cotton. GVH says cotton price will be 70mk/kg, but unclear when the buying will start, sub-TA [small crossroads market] has called for a chiefs meeting tomorrow about the cotton buying.

Married son of GVH who is now in SA (married at Ch. village, with woman who does tailoring course with Livia) came to Mudzi B one day to greet people. Venesi then invited him to go to her field with her so she could give him some mango’s. Kondwani told Gertrude, “that’s the way they do in order to attract men”). Pamela had even gone to his house to bring plate of mango’s and chat (wife of man angry). “while there are mango trees everywhere!” said Kondwani.

On May 18 Innocent grinded 100kg of maize, and yesterday went again with 35kg. must be eating a lot! Only brought a plate of ufa to the ceremony at J. village. Indeed eat nsima at any time of the day they like, and make a lot of thobwa these days. Are only with 3 adults, 1 big and 2 small children. While Elube has many children to feed but only went to chigayo with 1 bag some weeks ago. Gertrude doesn’t think Jasmine and fam spend their ufa in other way, just eat and drink a lot.

Chisoni passed by with nandolo from her field, saying she was just begging others from the ndiwo they cooked, so decided to go get some ndiwo herself now - probably sharing too? [Chisoni] Asked Gertrude to explain her some features of her new phone, sent from SA (only language options: English, French and Romana). Even the 1500mk zain phone only has English and French, no chichewa. Chisoni said Jeneti went with Lovely and Blessings to check where Ellesi is staying at Bazale before they will go to Lilongwe next week. He makes a living by travelling to SA to buy items and selling them to Malawi.

GVH was shelling nandolo - local variety. Already ate fresh hybrid nandolo earlier, now drying on the plant. Hybrid nandolo she received from concern universal: planted some, ate the rest. High yielding and early maturing, good variety. But next year will still plant
half local, half hybrid. Taste is a bit different and needs to continue what ancestors were doing. Her children must know the crops that their own ancestors grew, although nothing bad will happen if they stop growing local variety. Shelled a big full basin, not to keep, just for ndiwo, will send you some too, she said. This new variety is similar to the one ICRISAT distributed, she answers, some chiefs received too, but not her.

Vanessa explained that she was 1 of 16 women in 3 villages that received a mud stove from concern universal. All chiefs received, and the others were selected through a firewood collection contest. But were told that you need 3 relatively big sticks of firewood for the mud stove, while she usually, just finds small twigs, therefore cooks more often on the usual stones. Buit does like the mud stove, because after cooking on it, it stays warm so she can heat water on it without making new fire. There were indeed some ashes in the mud stove, it does look used, although at the moment she had a pot of water on the 3 stones-fire with indeed mostly small twigs).

I asked chief Mudzi B about the marriage advising (kulangiza): ankhoswe of man and woman plus chief of village and bride + groom gather and advise for only a few minutes on the proper behaviour for man and woman. That they should respect each other mainly, first woman is advised that she has to respect her husband, listen to what he orders, wash his cloths, give him water for washing body, cook well, kneel down when addressing him, don’t be rude (osachita mwano, kuwalemekeza abambo, azimvera lamulo la bamboo, kuwachapira, kuika madzi osamba kuba fa akamapita kunctchito, kuphika bwino, kusita (ironing, “even if he is not working,” she added), kugwada osati kuima (saying kneeled down, tha: “bamboo ndai ka madzi/chakudya”). Then the man is advised to take care of his wife if she is ill (if he loves her he puts madzi osamba for her own fire + in bafa, cooks for her, washes her clothes in case she doesn’t get better), after quarrelling he should apologize or buy her something eg clothes to make her happy (akadwala aziwonetsa chikondi, akalakwa azinen a pepani kapena kugula chovala kumutsangalatsa). After this they all go to GVH who then says more or less the same things, adding that “this man did not come by car or bicycle but by foot. You choose yourself to accept his offer anyway. Later when either of you changes behaviour, once you get more things, you can remind each other of how you started off together without anything,”: mwamuona mwamunayo wabwera pagalimoto kapena panjinga? Ayi! Wamukonda wekha! (you loved him yourself) you can ask your husband angrily later: unali ndani? And he may answer: ndinali ovutika, tapeza zinthu limodzi. (I was poor, we found all these things together).

Why do many people not follow the advised proper behaviour, I asked, they don’t apologize to each other, have different hearts (osamva pepani wamnzako, mitima ndiyosiyan), they don’t sit together to discuss, are stubborn/unforgiving (kusakhal pamodzi kukambirana, osagonjerana). I had to push, reemphasize that things are different where I come from, chief first kept saying that men and women are advised the same things (respect each other), only when I asked if man is told to bring madzi osamba for
wife did she and Gertrude laugh.

Jasmine came to ask how to add units to cellphone, Gertrude was fetching water, so I tried to explain. She then went on to chigayo, but Innocent went yesterday too, I asked. Innocent went with 1,5 tin, now I am going with 1,5 tin too so well have 3 tins of ufa which will last us 6 weeks, said Jasmine. Gertrude doesn’t belief it will last them so long.

At [small crossroads market] clothes and ziteje sellers, matemba, shoes, restaurant, tomatoes, goat meat, chips, kanyenya, mat, bananas. But not many people at all.

Mr Chikombo was there, he said that government and cotton companies are still discussing. Gov wants companies to pay at least 70mk/kg; companies want the gov to lower taxes so that they can make some profits, otherwise cannot pay more than 30-35mk/kg. the Chinese are new buyers on the market, they are willing to pay, says Mr Chikombo, but are in cotton buying association, one cannot start before others. They were supposed ly the ones who last year said they will pay 150mk/kg this year, but Mr Chikombo doubts whether this was hard promise, “people talk a lot” some years ago few people were growing cotton anymore, because of lowering prices. We had to campaign to get them back to growing cotton, said Mr Chikombo.

But later says that people should actually focus on growing food crops rather than cash crops. From his experience nobody keeps any of the cotton money he/she receives, buy clothes, soap, bicycle, ironsheets. Last year many good houses were built after selling cotton. Last year buying started in April already (explaining the birth peak in Dec/Jan). nobody can keep some of the money till hunger season because the money is just too little: average of 15.000mk, with maximum 30.000mk.

Mr Chikombo has been working here since 1996, by that time there were not any projects (he mentions as change that he has seen throughout those 13 years). Due to his presence there are now more projects coming. At Mudzi A it is FIDP and concern universal (but are fighting because both work on agroforestry, FIDP was there first and wants CU to pull back, afraid that their mutual donor - the EU - will find out that they duplicate, but CU paid villagers 200mk/day to plant the trees, so people are more happy with the CU tree project because of this benefit), at Mudzi B only concern. ICRISAT is at J. village, K. village and Ch. village. why is there still poverty and njala, what do projects do wrong, I asked. Don’t focus enough on food security, should be much more on intensifying, manure for example, but they’ve learned how to make manure, but find it too much work, I said. Hmm, yes, he laughed, it is labour intensive indeed, and benefit is not directly visible, takes some years. But he is of course agriculturally biased. Nobody has any idea when the cotton companies and the gov will break this impasse. The longer one keeps cotton the lighter the weight, but elsewise no problems, can’t go bad.
At 3pm went to church near Serena but found other meeting going on there. Serena said they usually meet at her place in such a case, but today probably not since the teacher had not come yet, while usually she had arrived by that hour. On our way back to main path found Mrs Ntawanga, Chikondi and Julia and young sister of Chikondi with some ragged notebooks and pens. Had they smelled that I was going to see their adult school attendance? I did ask Mrs Ntawanga about it yesterday, and she saw us pass on bike, just before 3pm. She started to make excuses, saying that they don’t have any pens, so have to wait for children to come home from school, therefore delayed (lower standards knock off before 1.30pm, but std 8 has afternoon classes till 3 or 4 pm to prepare for examinations). Coming back from [small crossroads market] we found Serena and Aisha with the other women, on a mat, children playing around them.

In front a nice and shiny blackboard with the date and “masamu” (sums): 15 divided by 5, 9 divided by 3, 14 divided by 7 etc. the women had copied them in their notebooks and made them, then having them checked by Victoria who sat to side. Chikondi was first to finish, then others had problems, Mrs Ntawanga was secretly helped by her younger daughter, Aisha and Serena took longest, Aisha didn’t understand that 14 divided by 7 is not 7. when everybody had finished Julia gave 5 multiplication sums: 2x2, 2x6, 2x7, 2x8, 2x9. as example she did 2x5, drawing 5 couples of 2 lines and then counting all the lines. Young daughter of Mrs Ntawanga and Julia did all the sums like that: drawing many lines, either on back of notebook or on hand. After that the class was finished. When we arrived for the 2nd time, Victoria said she had been delayed because she collected firewood for a certain ceremony in the church. Somebody suggested that they should pray to wrap up the meeting, but as they hadn’t prayed at the beginning either they decided just to say “God is great” and have it over with.

Victoria complained that only few women are participating although many can’t read and write, but are ashamed to come. Last week only 3 came, now at least 4, but still not many. Most just ask others to read for them when necessary.

She also complained about the cotton impasse, the cheating that the buying will start next Monday, each week. Chikondi said it’s dangerous to have all that cotton inside the house, it may burn when they take a burning stick inside by lack of matches. If the cotton catches fire, difficult to put it out.

Granddaughter of Eveles came to bring basin of rice, already cleaned from husk. Some people go to the chigayo for this, said Jasmine. Most keep it in the husks and only pound what they want to be eating.

Friday June 12 Mudzi B - Balaka - Mudzi B
Livia came in early morning, had indeed met with China shop boyfriend. Had been able to leave Hana with a friend who sells tomatoes at Balaka. She asked him money, saying that she needs 500mk to get a loan at Rural Finance. He didn’t give her anything, except his word that he will give her a cell phone which she can sell to find money. She said she just wants money from him, but he seems more serious, said again he wants to see her parents, but she didn’t give their. Sofia came to greet too, and to thank very much for the help we had given to Kingsley (I gave him 2500mk for guarding at this house for the time I was in NL). He bought some clothes with it, she said. Clearly wanted to let us know that she knows about the money, but why?

Discussed yesterday with Gertrude that a goodbye party may not be much appreciated: it will involved a lot of work for the women, may cause quarrels about who ate more and less meat, some people may even be ashamed to show up at all. Gertrude thought of several 40 day ceremonies, to which some didn’t want to go cook, not wanting everybody to look at them, and indeed gossips about who just came to eat (funeral of Thandizo), who ate meat while others just beans etc. and what I understood of 40 day ceremony of husband of G VH: men are eating, while women just busy fetching firewood, cooking and cleaning.

husband of Sofia had eventually called back yesterday. Gertrude told him about the door having been taken from her house, he just said to tell A that he will see what to do.

Ch. clinic closed since Tuesday because health officer had to go to Blantyre. I asked his wife at his house, said he was in town, by Monday clinic open again. Gertrude saw him sit in another village with some men and loud radio. He told her he had gone to Blantyre, just returned, had closed clinic for these days.

At Balaka DC was not in yet, were referred to a man with “rehabilitation” in title above his door, Mr Clif Thyanga, he did the big man act: bit offended that I have been doing research for 10 months without informing/involving him. And “what is the benefit for us?” On what basis did you select Mudzi B village? - interrogating me. told him I had only manoeuvred via the DADO, coming from an agricultural research institute. But cross-cutting issues are involved, he objected. I could get the old Balaka Socio-economic profile (2003) if I paid 1500mk, he didn’t want to give me the draft of the 2009 one, which should be out end of this month (jaja). About borehole (“is one really needed there?” put it in writing, that it’s really needed and that you are willing to assist with funds. Although hadn’t mentioned that last part) he estimated costs at 1.8000.000mk, because it involves lot of expertise and machinery that they have only few of. Referred me to the Water Department for better information, Mr Mapsele. We didn’t find him in his office (to Salima) but Mr Charles Mkwate (Water engineer) said it used to be about 1 million MK, but now some offer it for 850.000mk, including siting and drilling, the whole package. If I have the funds, they can
Continued to Balaka district hospital where we were easily referred to the maternity ward after telling at reception that we want to see birth register. There we were put aside because “busy”. After half an hour we knocked on door again, now could come in immediately and the woman who was later called away for woman in labour (in same room where we were looking through registers!) took time to look through all the registers with me lot more disorganised than [nearest trading center] hospital. All different books, only some months summaries gave total number of deliveries. She murmured/excused that she had heard of a survey that was going to take place but the one who knew more about it wasn’t in today. April 2008 could not be found, meanwhile the pregnant woman behind a curtain was puffing and suffering loudly. The nurse asked another who went to check: ndikubwera? No, nodded the other, not necessary yet and the woman in labour was left to suffer alone again. A bit later the nurse did go when I told her I had bothered her enough, never mind April 2008. I suspect much of the data is in correct, still a peak is clearest from July to September.

Mr Langwmale was at Catholic Women’s Org for a meeting on agroforestry, for government employees and CU field officers, since Tuesday till Friday. Mr Chikombo was at DADO’s office, may be for this meeting too. When I called, Langwmale came to CU office, I gave him doc’s back (ao baseline questionnaire), he bought copy of Balaka socio-ee profile, is really trying his best! Apologized for not having visited, was very busy but will come next week. I asked him about baseline data for Mudzi B, he said impossible to retrieve, all put together in computer. He had asked his boss but boss had said it’s a very big “book” (folder?) and analysis is not finalized yet (typical). But will inform me when it is (if ever).

Continued to Malawi cotton company near CU office. Were unloading seeds, the women overlooking the unloading of truck was officer in charge, Queen Chembonga. Also doesn’t know when buying can start. Today government is meeting with buyers again. She has to wait instructions from bosses in Blantyre, people at [small crossroads market] are mainly middlemen who then sell to cotton company at Balaka. At DC the man had said that they (gov? companies?) are trying to avoid the humpy tobacco sellings repeating itself in the cotton selling.

Ate fried chicken and rice for 600 at Zembani Lodge (Lucius Banda’s place)

Found Rural Finance Office in same building as AEDC Bazale: MRFC = Malawi Rural Finance Company. At desk the mlangizi (Mr Chipembere) who had come to [small crossroads market] for meeting with potential borrowers group, also there his supervisor and another colleague. He only was employed 3 months ago. He has to do everything for all Balaka clients = finding new clients, training groups, going after payments. Is only employee at Balaka office,
reports to Machinga office, who report to Lilongwe HQ. didn’t seem to have any
document about company so did it verbally. Used to be government, now independent,
since 1994-95, under gov were called SACA = Smallholder Agriculture Credit
Administration. Received money from donors like WB, but now just Gov. In previous
year (2008-9) about 50 clients, supervisor kind of apologized that they have had problems
at this office, high turn over because employees dying but now they are back on track
again!.

First thing Mr Chipembere started to explain was that they have 4 types of loans: “personal
loan” (for employees, recovery of loan is via salary, subtracted), Individual loan” for small
and bigger (from 60.000mk, recovery of loan through sale of commodities. For loans less
than 500.000 HH items like fridge or motor vehicle (depending on state and age) and
especially land for loans bigger than 5000.000mk advance payment of 20% of total loan
must be given compuslory. Insurance at 0,85% of total loan, in case client dies during
12 months in which loan should be repaid.

The insurance company pays MRFC the full loan amount back, MRFC takes the amount
that the client still had to pay back, the rest goes to family of deceased. “group based loan”
for groups of 5 to 9 members, also recovery through sale of commodities if loan is not paid
back. Minimum loan 50.000, max 5000.000. have to enrol in 4 week training program to
be taught about group dynamics, BS management, credit procedures, record keeping,
MRFC’s conditions. Then supervisor goes to check if borrowers are well enough
informed/educated, but I doubt now how serious these men take this. They sai they should
be going every day for 4 weeks - intensive training - but go only once a week because of
lack of man power and to save fuel etc.

Indeed Mr Chipembere said he unfortunately hadn’t been able to make it yesterday, and
has a meeting next Tuesday, but will go on Wednesday or Thursday. First said he spends
two days fulltime in the office: Monday and Tuesday, other 3 days in the field: finding new
clients and chasing people who haven’t paid. Then supervisor interrupted, saying he is in
office on Mondays and Fridays (not Tuesdays - to cover for that he is in office today).

When I asked what they do when monthly pay back is not made: “we warn client”. And
then if he or she still doesn’t pay back?” then we snatch katundu”, the supervisor said
vigorously “yeah!” the 2 other confirmed, laughing.Makes me think of article I read
recently, in which staff of microcredit org was described as aggressively enjoying taking
items from non-paying borrowers. If not enough money can be recovered by snatching
katundu (should be worth 150% of loan) then legal action follows.

Fourth type of loan is “micro BS loan” - this is the one for [small crossroads market]
group, should have 10-20 members, no commodities are needed as back up to get loan.
Advance payment of 20% of (individual) loan has to be made by all members before loans
are given. When someone is
unable to pay monthly pay back, the other members have to pay. “peer pressure” they call this, officially minimum loan is 10,000, but they prefer not to give this. Supposedly because that amount is too small for someone to make any substantial profit, probably because they don’t find it worth the effort, making just 3300mk. Max loan is 50,000 for first time borrowers, advance payment for 2nd time borrowers is 15%, interest 32%. After 3 years of paying back without any default (“also paying bach when we don’t ask for it, coming to the office to pay”) advance payment is only 10% and interest 30%, called “prime customer”.

There are many credit agencies these days, they confirm: FINCA, CUMO, Pride Malawi. They are different in sense that they provide bigger loans, monthly payable back instead of (bi-) weekly + over 12 months period. And we can be found everywhere, supervisor exaggerated, “that’s why we are called rural”, and pay back rate? Is good assured supervisor, avoiding real numbers so probably not very good. Interests are used for daily operating costs of company: salaries, motor bikes, fuel etc. donors sometimes involve them in projects, eg by paying the advance payment for clients.

Currently 6 groups are in some stage of enrolling in Balaka, some starting training like [small crossroads market] group, other just got their first loans.

Bought 90 bags of 500 grams kitchen salt (small stones instead of ‘table salt’ = powder) for 5000mk. Women will benefit from chitenje, their family from salt. Also bought 3 piles of dried fish (app 10 cm in length) at 100mk, 5 fishes each. For Eveles, who had basin of rice brought yesterday, and small bottle of cooking oil, hired bike taxi to carry all this weight home (200mk, but gave 500mk which he was pleasantly surprised about). Put bales of salt in plastic bags (at 40mk) so that no-one would see that we came into village with lot of salt.

Livia came to chat, Gertrude asked why she doesn’t want to marry. No need to, is able to find everything she needs right now, like money for soap (from her boyfriends). She [Livia] thinks that after next meeting with RF mlangizi they will get their loan - although he had been clear at the first meeting, which she attended, that they first have to do a training. According to RF man also the other credit agencies have their new members follow a training first.

Suset came to chat too, they discussed cotton impasse. Livia joked that she will just make a mattress with her cotton, when boyfriend of Venesi passed by towards [small crossroads market], Suset commented he is a friend of the father of her child and she once asked him whether he is now married to Venesi. Ah no, he replied, she is not my wife, just chibwenzi, will not marry her, already have got my wife, this is not marriage at all. Indeed never spends a night at Venesi’s, comes often, but only during day. Not staying some weeks here, some weeks with other wife - so it is not marriage. Gertrude concludes without doubt, “but still he is giving her
everything like money as we saw in her HH book, so she thinks they are married, but he always goes back to his wife to spend the night, so he is cheating her, “Gertrude concludes now with some uncertainty.

Like boyfriend of Grace does spend nights at her house, even though he has another wife else where, (leading women to wonder how he cheats his wife about this). According to Suset, Grace is currently “chatting” with 4 men/boyfriends (including father of her first born daughter Belki (who is about 6-7 years old, stays with daughter of Alma in Blantyre) who is married at [small crossroads market]. Also told the story that one day 2 of her boyfriends were at the shop, as Livia had told Gertrude too. Suset overheard Grace and owner of shop talking in shop about some underwear, which was Grace’s size according to owner of shop - which to Suset definitely means that they are in a relationship. But his wife is Venesi’s friend, and she told Venesi that her husband is on ARV, so Grace will be infected too, said Venesi.

A man passed by of whom both Livia and Suset ordered grasses for roof, at 100mk per bundle. (needing about 15-20 bundles for roof of small house like Livia, estimates Gertrude). WHILE Chikondi passes by with grasses everyday, preparing for the rainy season. Florence today said that her friends had started collecting grasses, she should start too. Can be found just around, eg where we went to fetch firewood. Gertrude wonders where Livia plans to find the money to pay for all that grass for her roof, may be with the loan from Rural Finance, because has only 2 bags of cotton, not even ½ bale.

Evelin came in dark, under pretence that she came to ask whether Gertrude had bought hair chemical in town for her today. While she had earlier said she didn’t want it anymore. Please escort me, Evelin asked. Gertrude first refused because already completely dark (no moon yet), but then agreed, assuming Evelin had something to say. Indeed, she had heard that Venesi is still continuing to write for us, thus will receive 4000mk extra, and Evelin had already made a budget with that money. Gertrude just answered that she received enough money, 10,000 in total, to have been buying all she wants. And today is already June 12, almost 15, when others will stop too. Evelin wanted to know if she had done anything wrong, but Gertrude assured her that was really not the case. As said, we just found it enough. Intriguing that Gertrude won’t tell her the truth (that she had somebody else do the assignment for her) or at least that we felt there were too many doubts about her work (eg that she had “just written” about giving money to the tree project, and changing of the handwriting - which we both confronted her with, not to speak of the body lotion she supposedly bought very often). Gertrude is afraid that it will surely cause quarrels if she is open with Evelin about fact that we know she paid Boris to do the job for her. Boris will then get angry with Gertrude for telling Evelin, better they don’t find out as long as we are here, she feels.

Gertrude was told at 7th day Adventist church in Lilongwe that she will need a letter from the church she attended in the months she was absent there. Have many rules, she says, also not allowed to braid hair. When she did once, she was reprimanded, but later some
rich church members braided their hair and elders didn’t stop them. When working on Saturday (petrol attendants school) she was visited by the elders too and told to stop. She said, “what can I do? Classes are on Saturday and Sunday. You are challenging us! She was told to stop, stopped going but her mother begged her to go back, to any church, either Catholic or 7th day, may be will go back to “my own church now, she said, meaning catholic (I laughed surprised about all the strict rules). I told her she can go to church tomorrow, to say goodbye (then she told me about request for letter), but she emphasised that it’s better to go to mbera to talk to the nurse, who may be out later on the day.

About Livia: “is gossiping and laughing about Grace having many boyfriends! Apparently can see that it is bad, but does the same herself!.

June 13, Saturday

Livia came to bring trunk of firewood, she got a lot from her field, so mother had told her to bring us some. Asked for the number of her boyfriend in Balaka (china shop), wants to flash him with mother’s phone to say she’ll come to Balaka tomorrow.

Some men sweeping at graveyard, ceremony at Nola for Livia’s young mother (aunt). Also lit fire at graveyard to clear bushes, Gertrude said many people will be attending the ceremony, afraid that they will be revenged when they don’t. that people won’t go to their ceremonies, but if you go, can also lead to gossips that you only went there to eat. Can’t go and not eat, then you’ll also be revenged: people will come to your ceremony and not eat. Livia’s young mother passed away years ago, in principle should get rememberance ceremony every year, but can be for several family members at same time. Not only when somebody is told in dream.

Chikondi cheated some people that we were the ones who named her baby’s, and that we gave her the baby blankets (because we named them). She greets us now with A[name of one son] (Gertrude) and A[name of other son] (me).

House son Hamra now almost finished, all bricks have been put, grass for roof is waiting besides house. Probably did not cost him any money: made the bricks himself, did building together with brother, and collected the grasses himself. He had lot of potatoes for sale, “of course” his wife had land in her home village (next one in direction of [nearest tradingcenter], but Gertrude thinks he also had own land, given by mother. Has 3 children who will come stay in new house once finished and with Hamra.

Found nurse Joshua at home, sat inside for interview: 2 big couches and 2 big chairs, coffee table and 3 cupboards. Big TV (with cloth over it) and big stereo music player
Painting of map of Malawi with zebra on wall, cramped, name is Roseby Joshua, born March 24 1959 in Zomba village. Family moved to Balaka village when she was 5, because not enough space for cultivation. When she was in std 6 her sister got very ill, in hospital she saw nurses working and became interested in becoming nurse herself. Uncle paid her school fees when she stayed with him, but after he died, her parents took over. Of their 10 children, 8 went to secondary school, parents themselves had not, managed to pay all the school fees through selling of crops like sugarcane, bananas, cotton. All children had specific dreams (nurse, teacher) and the parents saw they worked hard in school indeed. Even paid for nursing school, 3 years (2 yrs general nursing, 1yr midwifery). Roseby passed examinations but was put on waiting list due to lack of space. Stayed home 6 months after finishing sec school and before starting nursing school. Helped at home, the usual tasks, farming etc.

Completed training in May 1988, started working in June. Was very easy to find job. First at CHAM hospital for some months, then to CHAM hospital in Dedza for 2 years. Married there in 1990. when I asked how she had come in relationship with this man she became shy. Just chatted, then he proposed. Still together, 3 kids (1 in form 4, 2 in private primary schools)

When on first pregnancy leave at home village in Balaka, the local health clinic begged her to work there during her 3 months leave. And after that begged her to stay, priest paid her salary (Utale health clinic). Worked there for 12 years, but very tiresome because often she was the only nurse there, doing all shifts, no resting. Other nurses would quickly leave again, complaining about lack of transport, far distance to their homes. Decided to move to government hospital where she would at least have some time off, share work with other nurses.

May 2002 to [nearest tradingcenter] hospital, works with 2 other nurses.

Husband [of nurse Joshua] does not work, renting 3 acres, cultivated by ganyu workers. This year only grew local maize (other years sometimes groundnuts too). Usually harvests about 100 bags, but this year only 80 because of heavy rains. For food and sale, always enough since she moved to [nearest tradingcenter], when I asked ‘local or hybrid’, she “confessed” local, excusing that she grew hybrid before, likes it a lot only had problems with storage, found that it couldn’t be kept long.

Says she and husband decide together on expenditure, but when I ask about TV she says she decided, because her eldest child often went to video shop to see films and she feared that he’d see bad things there.
Do you [nurse Joshua] have impression that most people are well informed about HIV/AIDS? According to their behaviour, it seems that they don’t believe what they are told. You can be telling a woman that she is HIV positive, and next year she will come pregnant. They often die after their second pregnancy. Often don’t even reveal their status to their husband, afraid he will end the marriage, men usually don’t come to get tested, most are female. The males that come are most often boys, men only when they are very sick, have STDs eg that’s when they get tested. Seems they trust themselves, or don’t want to believe that they may be at risk.

Also condoms are almost exclusively taken by boys (for free). HIV prevalence very high, out of very 10 pregnant women, 4 or more are usually found positive. Once tested positive some don’t come back anymore for further antenatal checkups, deliver at home, or go to a traditional doctor. Some don’t come to hospital at all, afraid of the tests.

She repeats that many women seem reluctant to tell their husband’s when HIV positive, afraid that their families will break. Don’t tell until they get very ill, she thinks it is ignorance rather than lack of information that HIV continues to spread. People like their culture, having 2 or 3 wives. Infection spreads because of their marriage behaviour, when a man is found HIV positive and is told to bring his wives for testing he happily brings all his wives, while women just keep quiet. She estimates that about half of the people that are referred to Balaka for CD4 count, don’t go, “don’t trust the results and just stay at home”. Only those with very low CD4 get ARV others are put on Bactrim daily. Pregnant women that are HIV positive but not on ARV get nevaperine pill to take home and take in when true labour starts. And are advised to come to hospital with baby even if they deliver on their way to hospital or at home within 72 hours so that baby can get nevaperine too. But some only come after 2 weeks or so to get their free bed net, some people even tear their HIV test results from their health passport.

At VCT mainly youth is coming, adults only tested when they are pregnant, want family planning or all very ill.

[Nurse Joshua:] Why do some women stay with husband that moves around and may infect them with HIV? May be poverty, thinking that if they will chase their husband they won’t be able to find what she needs. Or the husband may be threatening her, that he’ll kill her if she wants to divorce. In her opinion it is not easy to find a new husband (I suggested it is), women are not often proposed. Man may look at the way somebody is dressed and think that she is already married.NB: herself relatively old when married, husband not working and her general reasons for staying with useless husband (she puts him in low risk categorie because not working, “keeping husband for respect outsiders, violet threats), using jargon (root causes”).

For women who are not working, stay with husband because they need his help in taking care of the children, women who do work may think they can’t stay without husband. Thinking that
people won’t respect them if they are single, saying that she is an uhule. So they keep their husband to be respected or because he may threaten them with violence - she [nurse Joshua] mentions again. Some men are faithfull, if she hears he is not moving around, then can just decide to keep him, not to face problems (said this at several points - may be trying to say that her husband is not moving around. Also threats she mentioned several times, referring to her own situation?) faithfulness may be related to religion, as for muslims it is not a son to have multiple wifes while for Christians it is (she CCAP). Religion plus cultural beliefs cause risky behaviours, she says. But also she has noticed that The men who like to have girlfriends besides their wife are the ones who have money, who have a job. They are at higher risk of HIV, when they have money, they like to go to a bar, drinking and seeing their friends having girlfriends, they want that to, and forget about their wives. While those who don’t work stay at home and take care of their wives and families “money and beer are root causes,” she said, clearly having worked with a problem tree participatory method (like in the adult school guide book)NB: herself relatively old when married, husband not working and her general reasons for staying with useless husband (she puts him in low risk categorie because not working, “keeping husband for respect outsiders, violet threats), using jargon (root causes”).

Thinks that income generating projects for women will help (I asked), for those who get involved with men for support, can now find another means if assisting their family. But there are not enough NGO’s providing loans for all who want. When I object that loans may also put some into deeper problems, she states that “their problem is understanding [debt]”.

She is off duty now, cannot access the birth registers and apparently didn’t want to ask fellow nurse. Better come back Monday.

Livia said yesterday (at gossiping about Grace and her many boyfriends) that she herself still goes for injection, because does not want another child. But nothing about preventing HIV.

Gertrude asked Rosa about her plans with her cotton money: no specific plans yet, but definitely not school fees, father will have to pay those.

Asked cotton buyer at [nearest tradingcenter] how much he pays, he took a long time to answer, then decided to opt for 70mk. Bodza [nonsense], at [tiny crossroads market] saw scale of maize buyer, pays 30mk/kg.

Venesi came to say that she has been called by concern to meet at their office tomorrow for a
workshop: doesn’t know where but was told that it will take quite a lot of days. Will be taught about BS management and will receive loan to buy the mud stoves and sell them. But doesn’t think many will be buying, because price is way to high for what it looks like. Has one standing outside her kitchen herself, so isn’t using it. Because it needs a lot of firewood, and often doesn’t have that. But she has, does use it, she says, will tell the CU staff that the price is too high. Came to say that she won’t be here on 15th when we were supposed to get her HH book. Complained about the waiting for the cotton buying to start. Last year price was 65mk, if they could at least get the same now. Somebody started buying at 38 now at [small crossroads market], she said, but he is afraid to be caught.

Everybody has to wait till Bingu gives the sign. Venesi speculated that Bingu was to show his power as the new president, hence refusing to give in. she [Venesi] was selected as REFLECT facilitator through an exam, which was done by 5 women from each of Mudzi B’s 6 villages, so 30 in total. Those who had most education, and were seen fit by the communities. Not selected by chiefs, she said explicity. Exam had questions like how they planned best.

I asked her whether she has to share her harvest with the husband she divorced, Ah no. but what will he be eating? He will buy, si mwamuna? (isn’t he a man?), has BS of buying buckets, pots, cups, and exchanging them for chicken, and sell these.

Sofia came to greet on way to chief Mudzi B to pound rice which she planned to eat with nsinjiro because lacking ndiwo. At chief Mudzi B just to chat at same time. Kondwani came to greet too, hadn’t seen me today yet. Kondwani and Gertrude played bawo, Ada knitted.

Pamela came to ask Gertrude about jersey, her child looked seriously ill, vert weak and thin. “mutu”, she said, head ache.

Chisoni had been sleeping in afternoon and come for some chatting. Said she’ii just eat potato tonight, because tired of nandolo, when Goldy passed by, Venesi commented that she is pregnant, and that Venesi had seen her with a boy at [tiny crossroads market] but also with Levison, so that it will be difficult to know who is the father.

Sofia said that she had seen that Livia put up a mosquitonet in her new house (without roof), so wants to start staying there now, Sofia concluded, and will start cooking her own food now. We will see, Kondwani commented. Sofia said she had decided to join the cooking group at funerals, paid 50mk contribution, “so that people will help her if something happens to her”.

Livia’s house was first built by Jasmine’s brother from J. village, but Livia complained that he didn’t
work hard. She paid him 800 or 1000mk, and then asked the sons of Elube to finish the job, paying them the remaining 700 or 500mk.

Brother of Jasmine who came from Mangochi probably bought bike on pick up truck, as people often do, says Gertrude.

What Venesi answered on CU’s test on how she will approach the advising of elders: ndidzawalemekeza (I will respect them), sindidzadziwonetsa ozindikira (I will not show as if I know everything), ndidzalankhula mawu mwaulemu (I will talk to them in a respectful manner).

Sunday June 14

When Gertrude went to borrow axe at Phingi’s in morning, saw indeed Livia coming out her new house. Livia said she will start cooking her own food too. Gertrude asked about relationship between chief Mudzi B and uncle of Innocent. He is now staying with Sofia’s ex-husband in Balaka, looking for a house to rent for him and chief Mudzi B. Either he makes a lot of money through selling traditional medicine or he works very hard in the field, or he is cheating chief Mudzi B, meanwhile sleeping with her.

Venesi came to sign for the 4000mk I gave her yesterday for the last month of keeping track of income and expenditure. Still wasn’t called by CU with further instructions.

I was impressed by Kondwani’s quick bawo playing - needs good calculating skills! Ada, Tumanene and Jasmine also. Jasmine commented herself that she didn’t go to school, but can calculate well at bawo. Many women like the game.

Gertrude will go back to Area 25, Desi found a house for her there for 1000mk. A simple one room house without electricity within a fenced compound. The owner lives in the big house (with electricity) with adult daughters of Gertrude’s age, with whom 1 of them Gertrude had been together at school. The landlady doesn’t like to put in single women, afraid that it will bring many boys on her property, but knows from daughter that Gertrude doesn’t involved in boys. Another small house is rented out to a (big) family, they have electricity. There a tap and a well on the compound. And a big light from the main house, but travelling to skyway BS college each day will cost her 160mk/day = 3200mk per month! So she’d better rent a more expensive house near old town so she can go to school on bike. But maybe prefers an Area where she is familiar, has some contacts incl relatives or just because here a house was found for her through her network. Let’s see if she moves to town later on.
Chikondi came to tell that her husband had been borrowing money to repay with maize later, and now came to demand maize from her for this. Chikondi refused to give because he had not helped her in the field. Then he became angry and threatened to burn her house down and kill her. She now moved her maize to her mother, and spent the night at Holy. Will stay there for some days, afraid that he’ll come back. He indeed tried to burn the house, but failed. The HH book got burnt a bit too, that’s why so many women are not married at Mudzi A, she said, because men can be very bad. That’s why at meetings you will see many women and only few men. I asked about the son of Hamra who now moved to Mudzi A. He is good, hard working man, the wife who just died was still his first, and he had built a nice house, with toilet, bafa and kitchen. They had 3 children, but 1 died, the wife died because of head aches. “Banja lake linali la chikondi” - there was love in their union/family, said Chikondi.

Levison came asking about his picture - which I forgot to develop. Had nails in his hand which he was going to bring them to his girlfriend, he said jokingly. Was on his way to buy cooking oil because already eating masamba cooked with some tomatoes for 4 days, today wants to have oil added. May be exchanged the (stolen?) nails for oil? Or gave them to Livia? A girl passed and he [Levison] remarked it was friend of Doris, and that those girls don’t like chatting to people, he wouldn’t want to marry them. Is happy with his own wife, although they fight a lot. It’s just like football, he said, sometimes you fall, but then get up and continue, still enjoying the game.

Following Gertrude’s write up of 3 knitting club conversations - when Phingi and Livia went to ceremony for Phingi’s daughter at J. village, people complained that they didn’t invite anyone from Mudzi B (cannot go without invitation), while the woman used to have friends here too. But the one who decided to make the ceremony chose to do it at J. village instead of Mudzi B.

- Hair extensions not allowed in mosque. Cost about 85-150mk per packet. Gertrude bought 2 of 150mk for her current coupe. Grace put them for free, but Gertrude gave her 200mk for it.

- Complaining about Jeneti asking high prices for her sweet potatoes (as first one to start selling. One for 10mk, “as if we are azungu [white people]!” where are school children going to find enough money to buy that? Is it after harvest time already? - referring to the time when people finish harvesting and children look for left behind maize cobs to sell. “It’s a sin”, when I will harvest mine I will sell for 1mk/piece”.

- Discussion about using dried empty maize cobs for firewood.

- Ada should put on chitenje on babygirl, because one of the elders may see her in a top
alone and reprimand Ada for not covering up, for inappropriate dressing of child.

Tumanene flashed husband: “I troubled my husband to come inorder to give me another child, I want to knit a baby suit”. Kondwani first commented that her last born is still young but later agreed that that one is growing up now. Ada and Kondwani reprimanded Tumanene for flashing her husband in stead of waiting for him to call her, husbands should be calling by himself. He doesn’t charge his phone, Tumanene excused him. Pff, that only costs 30mk, objected Vanessa. You’re flashing him as if he will change his mind (about coming back to you) - Kondwani. He will come, replied Tumanene, I am not worried, he will come after 3 years, when last born is old enough to go to school.

Tumanene asked Gertrude to share a sponge with her and is reprimanded for this too, for begging a visitor while at her house. Gertrude tells her to take one. I will, says Tumanene, this is your house, “ngati munthu osapempha ndiye kuti ndi wakuba” - without begging it’s stealing. At Lilongwe they sell at 20-30mk, don’t give, says Vanessa, there are many at M. village. Tumanene doesn’t know that place, Kondwani explains.

When your husband is in the house and a woman comes at your veranda you should beat her (as she may be coming for your husband), says Tumanene when Vanessa says that Ada comes to her veranda often to chat. Kondwani agrees, “just beat her”. But later says, but she is your friend, can come to greet your husband. Then Vanessa says she will never go to greet a friends whose husband just come back from SA (may lead to suspicious). Then tells the story of how she had joked to one of her friends that she wanted soap. Then the friend had replied that she didn’t want soap, but her husband. Vanessa very angry when a car comes with many things to unload from SA I will not go and help her! My husband gives me enough, although hhe is as poor as Lazarus!

Innoncet asks for the name of the friend (“may be its my mother” - Is your mother a liar” Kondwani then asked). Kondwani said they should leave it, had told Vanessa so too when she had come to complain just after it happened. We should not gossip so much, “koma kwa Mudzi B kuno mabodza sadzatha!” - but concludes herself that people at Mudzi B won’t stop gossip. Then speaks about Chikondi as a liar, repeating the story that Chikondi had been gossiping about a woman with a husband in SA who was moving around with many men. The husband had heard about it and said that he trusts his wife, and that “Chikondi better not be dead” when he comes back so that he can punish her. Vanessa said she now started to chat with women who don’t have husband in SA. Tumanene replies she will not stop chatting with Vanessa “because we used to share ndiwo” = koma ndidzibwera kudzacheza, sindisiya, chifukwa timagayirana ndiwo.

Tumanene singing. Kondwani: she is happy because she spoke to her husband now. Tumanene: “ndimamukonda mwamuna wanga”, if I am married it is through this phone.
Conversation 2

-Jane comes and asks if I am sleeping, are you ashamed to be chatting otherwise? Asks Sofia. B denies: if one is ashamed to eat, you will die of hunger. Later Jane says that her uncle called saying that he is in Salima, while actually at Mangochi, cheating (amanama) “chimodzimodzi kuba” says Kondwani: cheating is as bad as stealing. Later Jane asks if one can go to a ceremony without having been called to come and eat. No, says Sofia.

Ellesi remarks that father of Dorica has come. Sofia says: angofuna adye chimanga adzipita” - he just wants to eat the maize and go again.

- Jane says she is angry about not having been able to play netball yesterday, and that tomorrow they”ll be able to play even though there will be a funeral because it will end at 2 pm. Sofia then says: mumafuna mudziwonetsa miyendo kwa amuna = you always want to show your legs to men. Ayi, says Jane. Later Ellesi says about netball: komwe adzipita anyamata ifenso atsikana komweko = wherever boys go, we girls will also go there.

- Davie staying at Sofia’s house for some days after having been quarrelling with Jasmine and Innocent. Moved back to Jasmine for only few days, then Jasmine fell ill and had bad dreams in which her deceased daughter (mother of Davie) told her that Davie should go live with his young mother at Zomba. He left soon after and has not been back since. Gertrude believes Jasmine really had dreams “because she was very ill”. Took 2-3 weeks for her to get better after Davie left.

- Kondwani: hear what happened to me yesterday! Jane gave me 50mk which she had found at J. village. Was I wrong to give it? asked Jane. no no, my kids bought fish with it and ate.

- Jane to daughter of Rosemary: must comb your hair, you look like someone suffering from AIDS! = ukukhala ngati odwala Edzi. Meaning having less hair on scalp, says Gertrude. You’re the one who gave her AIDS, Ada then joked to Jane. “Maybe” adds Kondwani.

Conversation 3

- Brief mention that Esnart is not able to fetch water, because beaten by Boris after having accused him of stealing ufa.
Livia was sent by Phingi to beg some onions but Gertrude didn’t have. Tumanene says: why doesn’t she just buy? Kondwani: sindikudziwa koma alibe manyazi [I don’t know, but she has no shame].

Kondwani says her son is refusing to eat okra, share me some beans, to Sofia who answers “no problem, I will give you”.

About Evelin not willing to share thread (“dsoesn’t like chatting to people”)

After Tumanene leaves, Kondwani gossiping that “Tumanene’s husband sends her ugly clothes from SA, as if from Malawi, while Blessings had said there are nice clothes for sale at SA. Tumanene is even ashamed to put on those clothes.

Lovely says that “even though people will gossip about me, I will come so that aunt Gertrude should apply chemical in my hair so that it will grow”.

Lovely and Jasmine have phones but are not able to read/write (except own name), so won’t be able to send/read text messege.

Chief Mudzi B should not go stay at Balaka, feels Gertrude. Then she will have to pay for everything: rent, food, firewood. Will not know when husband will choose to come and pay for these things. Here at least she has her own house and field, indeed Innocent said too about Sofia whose husband wants her to move to Liwonde, but she hesitates because she knows he moves around a lot, and when he isnot around she will be the one to find money for rent, food etc.

Last interviews Mudzi A II (others in laptop)


2. As many other women their first answer is that the “ntchito” of men and women is different. Probing more didn’t make them very talkative. Men: cutting down trees, women cook. Further difference: men can give women a mamba (impregnate).

3. Men can do certain things that will help them get a job which women can’t, are stronger.

4. There are org’s that can help (as if I am testing them on this), like OREC. For both
men and women.

5. A woman can’t know beforehand whether a man will be good or not, can only accept his proposal! Maybe stay together because they discuss well within their family.

6. Many men are not satisfied with 1 woman, they want more.

7. Chilengedwe….. [nature]

8. Some are happy with it, depending on the way in which the woman finds the money. Not if she finds it through men.

Mother twins, Josephine

2. It’s difficult for men and women to work together. While women work in the field men are often drinking beer. Most men don’t behave well, are talkative. As soon as they have some money, they just spend it on beer (talking about her own situation, Gertrude comments later).

3. A couple may grow crops together, but then when its time to sell the man will behave angry and just keep all the money to himself, not sharing it with his wife. The woman will just quietly accept, afraid of his anger. Other men can find money by being a carpenter or builder.

4. The wife may say: “lets divorce”. The man will just marry another (kukwatisa wina), may be first threaten to do so, saying that “may be another will be of better behaviour than you!” to his wife.

5. It’s not good to marry many men. If unhappy, better discuss that each should find his/her own money and just stay together like that.

6. When one is unhappy with the behaviour of the other, will divorce and try another partner. Because partners don’t change their behaviour, people exchange partners.

7. Because of nature, and its difficult to know whether the next husband will be better, you can’t know his behaviour until you are married.

8. Some accept that the wife is the one looking for food, while himself he just eats. Are
even happy with that, but as said, its bad to be moving from one husband to another and another.

9. Panopa its better, women can do gain do, are allowed to take loans now.

First impressions from interviews: Men (are perceived to) easily abandon their wife as soon as they are slightly unsatisfied with her, while women try harder to stay with husband. Out of need for support, especially when she has his children (another husband may not take care of kids of a previous husband) - men are perceived to be better in finding money than women because of superior intelligence and physical strength. Other reasons to accept a bad or useless husband: to be respected by other people (bad to be hopping from one husband to the next) and to avoid suspicion of married women that the single woman is after their husband’s. “Chilengedwe” also often mentioned as reason for wanting marriage, meaning human nature(which can not be controlled), which according to Gertrude refers both to sex and the fact that it’s perceived natural for a man and woman to live together, same thing. And God’s demand that man should have wife and woman should have husband. It’s easier for a man to find another partner than viceversa because only men can actively propose, while women just have to wait passively. Sometimes have to wait a long time and then are happy to find someone willing to marry, won’t leave that one quicly, not wanting to take the risk of having to wait long again. Chilakolako (desire) also mentioned sometimes as reason for/staying with useless husband. And one can never know whether a next husband will be better, can only find out in marriage.

Monday June 15

Pamela comes by to greet, says she is fine but headache. I show her my infected wound on leg and ask what I could do: capsules - a painkiller she did know that is was caused by flies.

Last year people started offering 50mk/kg cotton at [small crossroads market], until at [large commercial estate] offering 65mk, then prices increased everywhere.

We found Aisha chatting with her husband in the shade of nkhokwe. Ex-husband of Balakasi came to visit when we were there.

Sofia said that if we had given money they would just have spent it on other things, now at least have nice chitenje.

Annoying that 2 from Mudzi A (Rosebill saying she stayed with family in-law while husband was in prison, now he is out again and they are moving back to Mudzi A & twin of
daughter of Josephine) came to demand their salt and chitenje although they don’t live in village at all. Cheated the first time, so as to be interviewed and receive soap and salt. Gertrude still felt we should give, otherwise “may get angry, people may gossip/talk bad”. Everything to avoid confrontations.

Magda and Chenawe complained about how everybody is now just staying without washing (because lack of soap/body lotion) because of the delays in cotton buying. Chenawe has no ufa to eat: can’t eat mgaiwa because of stomach problems and no money to pay people to pound maize for her to make ufa woyera. But both still have maize to sell, but prefer not to. Just said to show that people are getting worried now. Chenawe calculated that they spent: chemicals 350, seeds 400mk - and then only offering 35mk??

Mrs Ntawanga went to adult school, but teacher didn’t come, saying that since we are moving around giving gift nobody would probably show up, but stay at home and wait.


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Balaka Hospital birth stats

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At [nearest trading center] Bought some masamba (20mk), tomatoes 10mk, bananas 5 for 10mk, 2 chunks of cassava for 20mk. Still 1 cotton buyer, with some cotton, but no customers. Loud movie sounds, about Jim Morrison. [Bicycle maker] seems to have opened a shop at the veranda of closed shop: old and new bicycle parts.

Hamra answered that men usually have more money than women because some men, after having worked on the field together with wife just sell the crops and keep the money. Her son laughed that she was so free to answer, but husband complained: Do you see that they are writing what you are saying there!? Then Hamra said to Gertrude liii, those questions you are asking are getting me into trouble! No just joking - laughing hard while chief Mudzi A continued to complain.

Most women hope we will visit them again, or at least call, Rosa had waited with sister from 4pm till dark at our house to ask for Gertrude’s telephone number. Suset was chosen “by the people from the village” to volunteer for UNICEF “kids week”. Gertrude says it may indeed be just like that, people are gathered (who ever feel like coming) and they choose people of whom they know they went far with education or a committee gathers at Mr Ntawanga and chooses such people on behalf of the village.
Tuesday June 16

Yesterday there has been rumours that cotton buying would start. husband of Vanessa went to [small crossroads market] to check, but came with bad news.

Early morning Hamra came to say that Filimona is not in village these days, what are we going to do? Worried she won’t get her gift, AARGH!

Others who do exam to become REFLECT facilitators: husband of Rose, Lizzie, Teleza, Akileni (Mudzi A II).

Passed by all people in Mudzi B to bid farewell, wish them all the best in future, give chitenje and 500gms salt and ask questions to some(not all because lacking time).

Findings: several mentioned it is looked down upon to go for ganyu or BS as a woman. People will make fun of you, or at least some are afraid this may happen. Something I suspected, but never heard about yet. Amila said that people laugh at her for doing sugarcane BS (going to [tiny crossroads market] today with heavy bundle, bought for 400 total, sold half of it yesterday for 400, so remaining half will be profit. At 4pm, yesterday too and sold a lot, so apparently good time, already on her way there three people stop her to buy, for 10-15- 20mk), only asking her why she acts as if she is not married. Pamela thought that may be people are poor here because they prefer to stay at home when somebody comes offer them ganyu/ask if they can do ganyu, “because people may think you are very poor” when accepting to do ganyu, eg in somebody else’s house.

Amila borrowed 200mk to start this sugarcane BS, is first year. Sold cassava and zitumbuwa before. Sell at school, [tiny crossroads market] or in Mudzi B.

Many women happy with the chitenje. Jeneti said since she was born nobody has never given her a chitenje like that (Bingu? Can’t belief). Alma also said nobody ever does this, Dora said that people from other villages had been mocking Mudzi B for allowing me to do all this research without any benefit to them, but now they will be angry and everybody in Mudzi B and Mudzi A happy. GVH said she has been called to sub-TA twice about allowing a mzungu to stay in village, saying that I have only come to steal their blood (to sell elsewhere for high prices). Indeed used to happen, says Gertrude, when she was about 9-10 years a big car came from nowhere with people who came to take blood, supposedly to sell elsewhere for high price. Teacher told all pupils to run and hide, but come to think of it, they were black people not azungu. But don’t know who sent them. Also often people are killed, their body found without eyes etc. And many accidents with a lot of blood. During Muluzi, who was owner of satanic church. If you become member will find lot of money, but you have to kill someone, or offer body parts/blood of someone
else. But how this got to be connected with whitepeople, kaya.

But now GVH will go back to Sub-TA and proof them wrong, showing the chitenje, and the picture of us together!

Amila said - when when we met her with sugarcane - I am called an uhule [prostitute], but you can see I am just doing BS! Proud, laughing. Indeed Suset said a similar thing, and Teleza too, that single women paying for something are often talked about as “must be prostitute, if she can pay for that” even if people know you do BS like the zitenje seller at sawaliu, who said a husband is a good cover up when you’re BS is doing well, then people can think you got the money from him and not through prostitution/men (Florence and twins suggested that a husband may not be happy with his wife finding own income, suspecting it may come from other men. Or afraid that she’ll meet other men when doing BS (Pamela). Amila also said that people laugh at those doing BS (especially if married) as way to discourage them. Venesi.q if she is tired sometimes of eating masamba everyday and once buys matemba, those with husband’s in SA (who can just sit back and eat matemba everyday) say you’ll pretend/want to be like them, that you’re copying their behaviour. They want to be special, show ofrf with their priviledged position.

Many women said convinced that a woman who can take care of herself will not want to marry. Others say because of chilengedwe, or insinnate sexual desire. Rosemary said, just in case you fail to take care of self and kids sufficiently during njala or in case you’ll fall ill.

Tinenenji was surprised we didn’t ask her where her husband/owner of pregnancy is, laughing. The chitenje design that I choose is not liked (only Belita and Christina), other say disapprovingly: colour! Yellow with red, cheerfull as opposed to all others with lot of brown. I could have known, in shop they were somewhere below in corner, last year’s pile. The chitenje with Christmas balls (black, earthred and oker) was very “latest fashion” according to Blessings and Lovely, they both chose it, but both came back later to change for a very blue one. But then seeing all they chose another, but Lovely dared to come back again to change to the blue one after all. Also Kondwani came to change while she had already cut hers in 2. Not ashamed!

When I commented on [Bicycle maker]’s bike parts ‘shop’ on veranda, wondering where he found money to buy all parts. Gertrude said that his wife takes loan from CUMO but usually doesn’t do BS herself (only recently started mandasi BS).

Livia comes to show phone boyfriend gave her to sell, a samsung with KLEP. Gertrude comes in laughing to show me, has no backside to keep battery in - nor a battery: “he cheated
husband Jasmine and Nyamwale are making mkeka/mphasa.

Ellesi will come back to ngwira to write examinations for JSC IN Sept, said mother, Gertrude: but may be pregnant by then, or at least too busy with marriage to find time to study for it. Will indeed go to Lilongwe.

When Gertrude in Lilongwe to school, used to get up around 2/3 am to fetch water for bricks to be in time for school. Was laughed at too by other women who were just staying, asking her why she didn’t just get married. Not understanding why she was working her ass off.

Livia complained that her mother accused her of stealing a chicken and selling to Suset. “well, that’s what you usually do,” said Gertrude, why not just confess and say you won’t do it again”. Ah, but I didn’t do it, said Livia laughing. She bought a pot today to start cooking on her own, saying that she received money from her brother. Gertrude asked her how come she is proposed so often. Livia said giggling that she applies traditional medicine.

Alma was separating madeya from mphale, drying the madeya [maize cernel skins] on mat in sun. maybe to keep as payment for ganyu workers during hunger season, when maize is very expensive and people grind madeya to make ufa, although it tastes bitter. Dried madeya + some water added at chigayo [maize mill].

Blessings, Esnart, Jeneti, Lovely, Fissa, Haliday, Nola, Alma, Holy, Magda still ate their own maize until the next harvest. GVH bought at the end, but only 1 bag (at ADMARC, because chief). Tumanene also had to buy, despite husband in SA, at 400 MK (he did send money though).

Husband of Lizzie plans to go back to SA: his second hand clothes BS is not going as he hoped. Will await cotton money, then head back, Lizzie says she hasn’t asked him about his job there.

I was wondering about Livia saying she just wants to find money through her boyfriends in town (eg for the RF advance payment), surely they want to sleep with her in return. But when and where, Gertrude thinks in cheap resthouse like the ones Levison talked about, or at their houses if they don’t have a wife there. Livia said she chatted with the China shop boyfriend at his veranda, which Gertrude immediately interpreted as: Aha, so he’s not married.
Wednesday June 17

GVH harvested her cotton with younger brother of Kingsley. Came to say that she will go to sub-TA to report that I will now be leaving, because she also informed him when I came. They will be thinking that she received a lot from this mzungu, so could we please give her another chitenje to give there? She heard that today or tomorrow people will start buying at [nearest trading center] with 40mk, at [large commercial estate] for 35mk/kg cotton. They will wait selling though, buyers will increase their prices to bid up to each other, attract more sellers.

Mother chief Mudzi B came to complain she hadn’t received chitenje, “am I not your friend?” Yesterday, Hamra tried to make us give her the chitenje for Filimona, saying eventually that Filimona had taken hers yesterday. I told herFilimona should come to our house to get it, because I want to ask her some questions. Viola came to ask what about her daughter, Serena came in morning “to bring some groundnuts” and receive her chitenje. DIL of Dora watched all the giving and choosing from a distance, Doris bluntly said she would like a chitenje too.

Had great chat at Musitafa’s, interviewed mother and Charity together, because they were just sitting together anyway (mother zooming the chitenje that Chikondi had chosen and cut in 2, just for free because “Chikondi doesn’t know how to sow”). Doris came to flash someone with Mrs M’s TNM phone (2800mk) and started answering the questions too. Florence later also joined, were all quite free to talk, adding to each others answers. After finishing Mrs M asked if I could tell them something about my country, eg how we find husband. Saibi also joined (wanted to change 500mk and had big full bottle of body lotion which she put on her children and herself) whether we pay when marrying, if we have ankhoswe, who helps at quarrels, if we grow maize, farm or not, have livestock, many companies/jobs, people working at our house (where very surprised and excited about the machines we have for washing clothes and dishes, first thing they told Hamra and Viola when they joined), have chiefs. Florence kept saying I should take her to my country, she’ll manage to just eat bread instead of nsima (but 2 whole loafs in morning to fill stomach). Saibi cleverly remarked that here people need strong food like nsima because doing hard physical labour. Whether there is AIDS, graveyards, prisons just like here. Whether we can take care of a sick person (“just lying on the mat”) for a year, if we have villages or only towns (village’s, but each house has own water tap and electricity. “Here we only see electricity - and beds - when at hospital!”). g answered some questions by herself, e.g. whether we know nsima some don’t, others know it from books. Florence said she thought there must be a lot of AIDS in mzungu land because when she stayed in Lilongwe, lived near a house with male and female azungu, and big windows and she could see them all chatting with each other (in different couples all the time). How many children do we get, concluding amongst each other that if they will bare less children, bit by bit they will do better too. How we prevent after having 2-3 kids, I explained we usually prevent before. Myself for example - but Gertrude
didn’t translate that part. But here after getting injection, difficult to get pregnant for long time, Saibi said. Whether it’s the same medication, maybe because I had reminded them again that my questions may seem strange to them, because it’s all so normal to them how things go here, but should try to remember that were I come from everything is very different. Florence said: take me, just like Madonna took a Malawian child. Will they be watching me in NL like we have been watching at you? If we do initiation ceremony when girls start to menstruate, and if when one’s brother or sister is fighting somewhere, you take your friends there to help/take revenge?

Mrs Musitafa has still not received sewing machine, although they have arrived, she says were told they’d receive the machine and some money and cloth to get their BS started with. Still going 2x/week, gave birth to 10 kids, Charity surprised me with clever answers.

Moyowathanzi survey maybe from Uni of Penn women at Catholic women’s org Balaka. When I said to Musitafa’s that with us some people at death give their organs to a sick person, they concluded that baby’s must just be born more intelligent in NL, that they are able to do these kind of things.

Rural Finance mlangizi came indeed today, teaching them about record keeping and the life insurance (Innocent says that if someone's husband would die, she’d get money as condolence), encouraging them to find the deposit quickly. Can choose to 1000 for record keeping book, and 1500 as insurance when money may get stolen, husband of Jasmine told wife not to take loan, will only cause problems, if Innocent will be out doing BS someone needs to stay at home, and Jasmine is getting too old for this, should just be selling zigumu from home. Decided that with Innocent’s 1500 loan they will buy 2 bags of maize to keep till njala to make zigumu. With rest Innocent will go to lake, buy fish, spend night and then sell at Liwonde turn-off, then home to write record book and go again. When tired of all this travelling will just sell at [nearest trading center] or [small crossroads market].

Hamra came to say that husband of Filimona says she is at hospital, therefore can’t come. Just gave her chitenje and salt now. Then Viola also came, saying that her daughter is ill and therefore can’t come. Gertrude told her that the zitenje are finished now, but according to me she doesn’t deserve because we never saw her again after first interview.

June 17 [in notitieboekje met groene bamboe-kaart]

Elube came to ask chitenje for (lying) woman behind Lovely. Chief Mudzi B & Kondwani came to “chat”, “mentioning” their mother who still hadn’t received a chitenje. Adding that she overheard Elube family discuss they’ll ask the chitenje - “but will just keep it themselves!” said chief, “is not good, don’t appreciate what they received.”

Alma came to listen to her song on my voice rec again, and to thank that the chitenje that I gave was double, didn’t know!

Son of Hamra was fined 1000MK today at big tree: 500 for chief of wife’s home vlg, 500 for her family
for having knocked on wife’s door asking for nsima just after her death. He says to anger his mother-in-law and make her send him away (should stay 40 days in case of Muslim, up to 1 year for other religions in wife’s home vlg when she dies, but he wanted to go). Walking back, Hamra told him not to pay.

Elube said we should just give Fatima’s chitenje to her, but Gertrude said we will bring it to her. “Maybe at hospital, better give it to me…” Wurgneigen.

Balakasi did “all sorts of BSs”: zigumu, zitumbuwa. With money used to hire people to work in her field, but now just works hard in her field herself. Gertrude said earlier that she may have stopped BS when son went to SA (sending her some money every now and then, or other things she may want, like her phone with camera).

Decided to share the 6 cans of milkpowder among all women who gave birth to a (weak) baby during my stay here: Chikondi 2 cans, Christina (ill, coughing during pregnancy, but looks strong now), Ada, Monya (doctor diagnosed baby as malnourished), Holy. Bottle I bought as suggested by Sjaak I’ll give to Chikondi, for whom he had meant all 6 cans... But I have tried very much to be fair, treat everybody equally, don’t want to leave suddenly leaving 1 much more than others. Especially Chikondi, who will definitely not explain it’s from Sjaak, but brag how we privileged her over all others. Considering how she lied about me having bought her the babyblankets (although that may also have been to cover up how she found the money for it, as we told her to keep quiet about the HH book I asked to write. Indirectly I indeed paid for the blankets...

Sofia will go to stay with her sister at Liwonde turn off by end June together with husband. He says he wants to divorce his new wife now, thinking back of how he and Sofia used to help each other with their BSs. In stead of a cellphone he will give her money to start a fish BS, meanwhile looking for a house to rent. She is happy he wants to get back together with her, but will leave some children here with grandmother, to first check out how things will be going there. husband wants to go there by end June, thinking that cotton buying may start on first of July - promising good BS for his second hands clothes BS. He had sent Sofia rice, beans and 10 bars of soap, given to Innocent, but the rice pack was open (app 10 kg left) and 2 bars of soap missing. Sofia told him to either bring it himself from now, or through anyone but Innocent... Complaining about Innocent that she doesn’t even have her own blanket, uses mother’s...

Impressions from last interviews cont’d:

Women try harder to make marriage work, but if not, they “chase him”, while men “get up and leave”. Men don’t often make efforts to complain to ankhoswe & discuss & try to change wife. Just find another and leave - in that order.

Vendor at [nearest tradingcenter] currently offers 15 MK/kg cotton! Jasmine says that people say that on radio it was announced that cotton selling will start on July 1. Livia brought nsima (ufa woyera) and nandolo, prepared by Phingi - knowing that we’d be too busy to cook. Rather, too packed to cook... Very nice! Is what most people eat these days: ufa woyera and nandolo. We brought 2 cabbages as thanks, for which she came to thank because very tired of nandolo each and every day.

Livia said that (ex)husband of Sofia plans to move together with his current wife and child to first see if she’ll improve when he takes her far from her mother. So far her mother cooked the food that her daughter then gave to her husband.

Jasmine gave trad med for daughter of chief Mudzi B, to keep her baby after loosing her first.
June 18, LAST DAY IN VLG!!

Jeneti came to greet and tell us that Ellesi will be staying at Mtsilitsa in Lilongwe. When she left, she walked past GVH’s cotton field where Sofia’s brother doing ganyu harvesting cotton (“she [GVH] will definitely give him something [money] after selling the cotton”, is the way Gertrude put it. Gertrude heard already heard rumours about them 2 being in relationship, and indeed they started talking (quite openly, although no one around) that he had come to her house but found her out, yes she had been to funeral of Z’mother-in-law. That he should come to her house, and that she wants lemons, if he had known he could have brought her some. He told her to go home and cook him potatoes, and send someone to let him know when they are cooked. Will do. He is married at M. village.

Elube passed him a little later with water from njiko and asked him whether he had seen Jeneti now. Yes, talked to her.

Jeneti: I came to greet you here in field...
BF: I came to your house in morning but didn’t find you. Are you back now?
J: Yes, failed to go to Blantyre (where MIL will be buried), because of size of car.
BF: Your mother was getting worried because no one staying in your house, as Ellesi is now married... I will come to your house, but want some potatoes.
J: I will cook. Do you drink tea?
BF: Yes, and I know how to buy sugar (usually buy, so will do it here too)
J: I want some lemons...
BF: Came to your house yesterday, but didn’t find you. If I had know, would have brought you some.
J: I am going now (to cook the potatoes & tea)
BF: Sorry about the funeral...
J: Don’t tell me here, tell me at home...

Last days in vlg at Rosemary’s compound radio was on loudly often.

Auleria did not plant cotton. In Alida’s (2 room) house I did see bag of cotton.

GVH was chopping away cotton plants, even though they still contained cotton here and there, but “tired of it now”.

Son of GVH at J. village ill again.

Thursday June 19 on that radio that on June 24 a Chinese cotton ginnery will open at Balaka and strat buying cotton - “at price in overeenstemming met prijs op wereldmarkt” and will offer employment to many people.

Hazel says that it cannot be that someone would go to college on bike here. Baleke confirms, no way!

Pieter about World Bank: is bank that borrows money to African government (to which commercial banks don’t borrow because of low pay-back/high non-pay back risk) and offer expertise to spend loans
(but also grants) “wisely”. But lot of political games at high level. By replacement of country boss Kenya (previous one fired because of corruption schandal) by new one, who had been in anti-corruption/integrity commission, but was first refused by Kenyan government. WB did not want to step back, so (Nigerian) head flew in to settle issue. Then proposed man was installed and contract for new road was signed, although new road was already there, paid by other agency...

Pieter geeft voorbeeld van 2 studenten die onderzoek deden voor zelfde irrigatie project in Chikwawa. 1 in dorp 3 maanden, ander 20 km verder at Ilovo (supersjieke) compound. Eesret veel meer over lokale implementatieproblemen, sociale factoren. Andere meer toon van: boeren moeten gewoon doen wat ingenieurs zegg/uitdenken. Laatste is waar geluisterd werd door officiële instanties als WB, want ‘met ingenieurs = experts’.

In diss: rapport 2008 over ineffectieve NLse overheidshulp aan Afrika. In Europa, aan einde van jaren 40 vorige eeuw, had Marshall hulp gewerkt, en in Afrika, en elders, is het effect van hulp al 60 jaar lang nihil of gering. Soms is hulp zelfs bewijsbaar contraproductief. ... In NL tussen 1998-2006 +/- 10 miljard (= 10.000 x 1 miljoen) aan hulp verstrek: 6 miljard overheid, 4 miljard particulier. In absolute bedragen geven grote landen nog veel meer + hulp al halve eeuw voor 1998 begonnen.

2. kudzera mu ulimi: through farming

Gertrude komanso azimai mesa amathanso kulima : ee but women also do farming.

3. ee koma nanga kunoko kumbali ya azibambo ambiri ndi amene akutulukawa : but here according to men they are those who are going to South Africa.

4. basi timasiyana banja: we just divorce

5. amamusiyanso: he also leave the wife. Koma siambiri ayi nanga kwathu kuno kwa Mudzi A siambiri: not many but not many, here at Mudzi A not many.

6. kungoti mitima ndiyosiyanita eti ena amatha kuhala kuti mtima wawo ndiwabwino eya amati ine ndekha ndidzipilirabe koma munthu kumuwuza kuti ine ndikupha, ndiye munthu ungapilire? Sungapilire umaganiza kuti basi ndingosiyanita naye. Kusiyana ndikuti akuphe: the heart is different others bad. Others they say I will just accept, but if he is saying that I will kill you, can you accept it, you can’t, you think.

7. chifukwa cha nkhanza amunawo: because of abuse this men.
8. ayi sungafune: no you can’t need a husband.

A 2-3 Mrs Ntawanga

2. pa azimai amasiyana kuti uyu wammuna uyu wamkazi, nanga azimai timakalima kumunda kubwera kutunga madzi, kuthika, timatsuka mbale kuchapa koma pali ena m’mbanja amathandizana kuchapa koma ena samathandizana, amuna akapita kumunda timalima limodzi, akabwera ngati palibe ntchito ina amakhala pansi, ngati pali ina kumanga nyumba, chimbudzi, bafa amamanga mwamunayo, kitchen, ukakhala udzu ena amathandizana kumweta;

In women it is different that this is a man and this is a woman - women we go to the field, when coming back, we fetch some water, cooking, washing plates, washing clothes. But they are some in the family they help each other wasahing while others not. We work together in the field but when we go back home if there is nothing to do we just stay, others building houses, toilet, bathroom kitchen, others help each other in fetching some grasses.

3. pali ndi makhalidwe ake, ngati mwamuna uja sakuonetsa nkhanza sakukumenya, koma chisamaliro chikuperewera ndiye umati nanga ndizingokwirakwirira, Pamela bamboo wina ndiye umangokhala, kundimena, kutulutsa mpeni umaopa kuti ndingafu ndiye timasiyana: it depends according to the behaviour if the husband is not mistreating you, not fighting but failing to take care then you say it’s not good to be changing husband often. Having children from different husbands, then you just stay being beaten, taking out the knife you used to be afraid of death then we divorce.

Why bad: mwina ukhoza kutenga matenda komanso sumalemekezeka anthu amati awa ndi choncho amangoti mwamuna uyu wabwera winanso wabwera: may be you can get a disease and you are not respected. They say this is the way she is, men coming and going, then another man.

Ndiye wina kuti abwere amati amene uja amakonda amuna: then if some one comes they say she likes men.

Gertrude chifukwa cha kusagwirizana ndi mwamunayo, khalidwe limenelo mukamakhala konkuno mumakawona kuti anthu akagulitsa mbewu zawo ena amakhala akumenyana ena ndalama osaziwona, ndiye amati ndibwino ndikhale ndekha ndizilima ndiye amasiyana,
komanso nkhanza ukawona kuti mwamuna akuthamanga kwabbiri masiku ano ambiri amati m’mene mukuthamangiramo bola tisiyane mwina ndisatenge matenda. Chifukwa munthu uli ndi ana ambiri ndiye utenge matenda ana uwasiya ndi ndani:

Because of some disagreements with the husband, that behaviour if you will stay here you will see, after selling cotton and other crops others used to fight, others don’t show money to his wife and they say its good to stay alone and work in the field then they divorce. And because of abuse if you see the husband moving around a lot, then they say that according to the way you are moving around its good to divorce, may be we can not get a disease, because you have got a lot of children then you got a disease who is going to take care of your children?

7. mwina chilakolako: may be desire, ayi samadandaula: they don’t get worried, kuno kupeza ndalama ndikovuta: here it is difficult to find money, ndiye ukamupeza wolimbikira amati ndiye bwino: when they find someone who works hard they say its nice.

A 3, 4, 5 Hamra

2. zintchito za banja timagwirira limodzi, zilipo zimachitika, nyumba akumanga mwamuna yekha, kulima timalima tonse, tikakolola, ena azibambo samakolola amakolola mkazi yekha: in the family we work hard together, that's what happens, a man builds a house alone but in the field we work together. After harvesting other men they don’t help harvesting only a wife used to harvest alone.

Tasks: ena zimatheka amalima mkazi yekha mwamunanso amalima kwao, ena amalima limodzi mkazi ndi mwamuna: others is possible only a woman works in the field, a man works in his village, other men and women work together in the field.

Behaviour: timagwirizana m’mabanja mwathumo kakhalidwe: they discuss in the family how to behave.

In general: ayi sindimaona: no! I don’t see.

3. akalima zaulimi mwamunayo ndalama amatenga yekha: after growing crops the husband used to take the money himself.

Talking to her son (husband angry): ee nimbi tusisefe (yao) akusaleka wakongwe wangali likobili: ee do you want me to hide. They leave women without some money.
Why accept (husband said) can’t you see that they are writing what you are saying there? (Hamra laughed).

Amavomereza amaopa kuti tsiku silinakwane likadzakwana zoipa zija zimatuluka ndiye ukwati umathera pomwepo: they accept, they used to be afraid that the day has not come, when it will come, all the bad things will come out then the marriage will end there.

4. amatetsa ukwati amamuuza kuti ndikukusiyi: they end the marriage - they tell you that I will leave you.

5. kupilira - kuti nanga ndimuthamangitse iyeyu palibe chomwe ndingapange, choncho ndidzikhala naye: just accept saying that if I will chase him there is nothing that I can do, then I will just stay with him.

Amuna akusowa (laughed) dziko lino akazi tilipo ambiri koma amuna ndi ochepa, basi nthawi, ee kale amuna analipo, akazi analipo iii kaya: difficult to find men. In this world we are a lot of women than men. It’s time, yes in the past there were a lot of men - iii I don’t know.

6. kusagwilizana zochita: they don’t agree what to do.

7. ii kukhala awiri, kukhala ndi mwamuna kumacheza naye olo osakupanga chilichonse bola ukulankhula ndi mwamuna (mafunso enawa mukufuna tiziyambana): iii to stay two, staying with a man and chat with him although he is not doing anything, at least you are able to chat with each other (other questions you want me to quarrel with him)

8. ee amasangalala: yes they are happy, nanga si akungodya: because he is just eating.

Azimayi apano bola kale timakhala ndi nsalu imodzi yomweyi kokagona tifunde ndi mwamuna, kukacha ndivale. Ikatha kumupatsa mwana. Ndiye kuti pachaka amakhala ndi nsalu imodzi. Malaya amodzi koma nyumbamo mopanda blanket, ife ndikumabadwa bedi munalibe. Koma mphasa kugona osapinda, ana mbali ina makolo mbali ina basi kufunda chitenje, koma pano ndili ndi blanket pachaka ndimapeza nsalu 3 koma makolo athu anali osauka:

At least now because in the past we just had 1 piece of chitenje we used it when going to sleep with the husband. In the morning putting on the same chitenje, if torn we were giving the child that means after a year our parents used 1 chitenje, husband only 1 short, 1 blouse and in the house no blanket and we were born, without a bed but on the mat.
Sleeping without fording it, children the other side, parents the other side using chitenje. But as of now I have got a blanket, after a year I found 3 zitenje but our parents were poor.

Kusauka, ena molima moperewera kuti ukamakhala ndi malo akulu utha kumalima kwina thonje, chimanga, mtedza, tikagulitsa umphawi umakhala ochepa, ena malo alinawo koma m’mafupa mulibe chilichonse mphamvu mulibe: poverty, others no enough land to grow crops, but if we had a lot of place to cultivate, we could have grown cotton, maize, g/nuts after selling at least there is less poverty. Others have got enough land to cultivate but in their bones there are not strong.

A 6 Naima

2. mwam, una ndi mkazi ndiwosiyana mkazi amavala nsalu ndi dilesi, mwamuna thalauza. likakhala banja, amakhala makhalidwe osiyanasiyana, ineyo sindingathe kudziwa kuti mabanja ena amakhala bwanji: a man and a woman are different, a woman put on chitenje and dress while a husband, trouser, but in family they have different behaviour, I cannot know how in other families stay.

Sindingathe kudziwa: I cannot know.

3. komabe azimai ena amatha kupeza ndalama kuposa abambo kamba ka geni: but some women find money than men because of business.

4. ena amakadandaula kwa ankhoswe kuti awone zomwe zikuvuta koma ena amathetsa banja, mwamuna: amachita chimodzimodzi: they go and complain to a nkhoswe to see what is wrong but others end marriage, husband they do the same.

5. basi mwina kupilira: may be they just accept.

6. akazi ena amakana mabanja akuti amafuna mwamuna olemera, ndiye ena amalola amati kupeza bwino mumayamba limodzi: other women they refuse to get married because they want men who are rich, while others accept saying that you start getting rich when you are together.

7. chilengedwe: it’s nature.

8. sizingatheke koma mkazi ndi amene amasamalidwa ndi mwamuna. Koma amuna ena mwina amasangalala, basi ngati akugwirizana popanda vuto amakhala: it is impossible a woman is the one who is taken care of a man, but other men may be they used to be
happy, but if they are staying without any problem they stay.

A 7 Aisha

2. (children making noise) m’banja kapena chain? Sindimaona kusiyana: ijn the family or what? I don’t see the difference.

3. malingana ndi zomwe amachita komanso azimai ena amatha kupikisana ndi azibambo koma ndiwochepa mwachisanzo abambo amachoka kupita kukapikula chinagwa panjinga, mzimayi sangathe, kupita kunyanja ife timapanga geni yogulitsa masamba basi chifukwa tili ndi ana pakhomo: according to what they do but other women are able to do competition with men but they are few. For example a man goes to buy cassava for sale on the bike, a woman can not manage going to the lake, but we just do business of selling leaves because we have got children at house.

3. banja limatha - limathanso (child crying: we divorce - they also divorce.

4. umaganiza mavuto omwe sungakwanitse wekha. Chakudya, ena chakudya ali nacho koma ndalama yogulira sopo, mchere, basi ndiye kuti kumunda supita: you think of the problems that you can not manage to solve yourself. Food, others have got food but they don’t have money to buy soap, salt, doing BS that means you will fail to go and work in the field.

6. (laughing) basi anthu amadana, khalidwe mkazi kapena mamuna, mwina mwamuna kuyendayenda mkazi amati m’mene kunja kulili amati ndisiyeni ndikhale ndekha: they don’t like the behaviour of each other between men and women, may be husband just moving around, then the wife says that according to how the world is! Just leave me and I will stay alone.

7. azimai amatha kuphika nsima, kupita kumadzi yekha, koma ngati alibe zophika azipeza bwanji, banja limapatsa ulemu. Munthu ukakhala wekha amati ndiwe woyendayenda pomwe iwe sumachita: a woman is able to cook nsima, going to fetch some water, but if she don’t have anything to cook, how is she going to find. You are respected when you are married if someone is staying alone they say that you just move around while you don’t do it.

9. mwina kusapeza: may be because of poverty, kapena kusagwira ntchito molimbikira: not working hard in everything.
Azimayi timagwira ntchito zamundu timapita tonse tikabwera iwowo amangokhala, nthawi yokolola amamanga nkhowe: they work together in the field but women do a lot of things after coming back from the field men just stay. Time for harvesting they make amaize storage.

Azibambo kuyendayenda kwambiri, azimayi kukhalala pakhomo, kufunafuna kuti akabwera adya chiyani why: klufuna kupeza ganyu akabwera azikupatsa ndalama: men just moving around while women staying at home, searching what he will eat when he comes back, wants to find ganyu, when coming back he should be giving you some money.

3. ee azibambo amapeza ndalama komanso azimai olimbikira amatha kupeza ndalama koma ena amangokhala ndiyene sangapeze, ee kudalira abambo, maganizo kusiyana, makamaka ukakhala ndi ana: yes! Men find money but even women who works hard, they find money, but others they just stay and they cannot find some money yes depending on a husband, we think differently especially when you have got children.

4. limatha - limathanso: they all end marriage.

5. kupilira, basi kufuna banja mwina zina amapanga zabwino ngakhale zina walakwitsa: they just accept, because they want marriage, may be there is something that he used to do to please the wife although he makes some mistakes.

6. banja limakhala koma ngati pali zoipa limatha. Ifetu takhala 29 yrs kupilira, chilichonse ndimapanga ndekha, geni ku Balaka, kusenza kuno mpaka ku BK tsiku lililone, olo nthawi ya njala amangokhala. Chifukwa sibwino lero kukwatira uyu latha mawa uyu latha: marriage is there but if there are bad things you divorce we have stayed 29 yrs, just accepting, I was doing everything alone, doing business at Balaka, carrying on my head up to Balaka everyday, even in hunger season he was just staying. Because its not good to get married to this man and divorce, then the other one, same.

Chifukwa ana ndimasamala ndekha, school kulipira ndekha, amai ang pano anamwalira koma ndimawasa ndekha: because at that time I was able to take care of children, paying school fees and even my mother was staying here and I was taking care of her.

Ndimanizana kuti ndisamakwatre pafupipafupi, enafe timaopa azibambo (laughed): I didn’t want to be getting married often, some of us we used to be afraid of men.
Amangokhala basi kumangodya: just staying and eat.

Comparison: chimodzimodzi, chifukwa nthawiyo ndimasamala banja ndekha, ana kuveka ndekha, kudyetsa: it’s just the same because at that time I was able to take care of family, buying clothes for my children and feeding.

Kuipa kulipo nanga sikukhala wekha palibe olankhulana naye: there is disadvantage, staying alone that means no-one to talk to, I don’t have anyone else to talk to.

Poor; mabanja ambiri amadalira mamuna pomwe ena amapanga geni, zimatengera khalidwe la mkazi kapena mwamuna, ine sindimakhala pansi ndimasunga ndalama pang’ono pomwe ena ndili pabanja anakati taonani ngati Sali pabanja, akungofuna azinyengana, ineyo sindimafuna kuwaumiliza amuna anga, chifukwa ndimaona mavuto a ana ndi amai anga: in the family a lot of women depends on the husband, others they do business, it depends according to the behaviour of the woman or man. I don’t sit down but keep some money while others when I was married they pointed at me and said that have you see her! As if she is not married. She just want to have sex. But I didn’t want to force my husband because I had problems to take care of my mother and my children.

A 9, 10 Magda

2. limakhala chimodzimodzi malingana ndi momwe anabadwira, abambo ena alesi, amayi ena alesi, koma ena amalimbikira, kulima ayi, sikwenikweni:

It’s just the same according to the way they were born. Some men are lazy, women lazy, but others they work hard, even farming, others not really.

3. ena amapeza kuchokera mu ulimi, koma amaononga (misuse) kwathu kumo amuna ambiri amaononga kumanga nyumba, carpenter, kagwiritsidwe ka ndalama kamakhala kosiyana ena mowa:

others they find through farming but they misuse. Here in our village a lot of men misuse, others building houses, carpenter, they use their money in different ways others just drinking beer.

4. ena banja limatha - amasiyana ena kupilira, makamaka ngati wabereka ana ambiri banja likatha umavutika ndiye bola kupilira, inuyo mwakhala kuno nthawi yayitali mukuona ena tili pa banja, koma ambiri pabanjapo akuvutika chifukwa akagulitsa mbewu,
Others they end their marriage, divorce while others just accept, especially if you gave
birth to a lot of children, if your marriage ended you have a lot of problems, then it’s good
just to accept, you have stayed here for a long period of time and you see that others are
married but a lot of them in their families they have got a lot of problems, because after
selling their crops they don’t agree with their wife but 1 week out, no money when coming
back.

5. ndanena kale kuti wabeleka ana ambiri mwamuna wina aopa kusamala ana aja:
   I have alresdy said that if you gave birth to a lot of children the other husband will be
   afraid to take care of those kids.

6. kuyamba kwa banja sakumakonzeka, monga panopa munabwera koma ena mabanja
   atha, kumangotola mwamuna ngati tomato pamsika:
   They don’t get prepared when they want to get married, for example since you came
   here, other marriages ended, just finding husbands like tomatoes at the market.

7. ee amafuna mamuna chifukwa ndi chilengedwe:
   ee they want a husband because it’s nature.

8. ife ku Malawi kuno sitimadandaula (laughing):
   here in Malawi we don’t get worried.

Azimayi ena amatha kuthetsa ukwati: other women they end the marriage.
Azimayi akale anali aumphawi: women in the past were very poor.
Pano amayi ambiri ndi ophunzira, ena akumapanga ma BS ang’onoang’ono: nowadays a
lot of women are educated, others are doing small businesses.
Kale kunalibe malonda, tikalima mbewu zathu kudya basi osagulitsa:
In the past we were not doing business after growing our crops we were just eating.

Zinayamba kusintha pomwe tinayamba ulamuliro wa chikuda, kuchoka ku colonial government: things started changing when Malawi became independent from colonial government.

Chifukwa si onse amene amapeza chuma kuti atukule kuno ku mudzi ndikulimbikira kulima. Kulima kuli njira zingapo. Kulima wekha ndi bamboo, ulibe ndalama ya ganyu ndiye kuti ulima kumangodya, koma ngati uli ndi ana akuthandiza kenako mbewu zina mugulitsa:

Because not everybody finds money here in the village for some one to improve, that means you must work extra hard in farming. There are many ways of farming working alone in the field with the husband and you don’t have money to hire ganyu. That means you will just grow crops for food, but if you have got children who are helping you in terms of money that means you will grow other crops for sell.

A 11 Suset

Ayi sanabwere amati abwera lachitatu: no! he didn’t come he said he will come on Wednesday.

Ee tikufuna timalize tinayamba lachiwiri week yatha amati tachedwa, atiphunzitsa 3 days pa 23 abwera akuluakulu kudzatifunsu mafunso, kenako kutenga ngongole, anatiphunzitsa kuti pagulu tidzidziwana komanso momwe tingayendetsere BS kuti chimachitika ndi chain kuti munthu aluze kapena uwine:

- ee we want to finish, we started on Tuesday last week, they said we are late, he will teach us only 3 days but on 23 this month, the supervisor will come to ask us questions, then we will be able to take loan. Eee we already know a lot of things, that’s why he said that he will not teach us a lot because we were taking other loans in the past. They taught us how to know each other, how to run a BS, what happens for someone to make profit in business or not.

Ndidzabwino chifukwa amatipatsa ma example kuti tidzimvetsetsa kusiyana ndi kwakukulu chifukwa a CUMO akapereka pa 14 ikatha 2 weeks tiyambe kubweza pamene Rural akuti tikhala mwezi umodzi osapereka tinayamba kubweza wachiwiri, tidzibweza pa mwezi:
- it's good because they gave us some examples inorder to understand properly, there is a
  big different because CUMO if they gave us on 14 that means after 2 weeks we started
  paying back, while Rural they said we will stay a month without paying back and we
  will start the second month we will be paying after a month.

Ine ndinamva kwa abambo ena ake amatengako ngongole koma ali m’gulu la kwa [nearest
tradingcenter] :

- I heard from a certain man, who is also taking loan but at [nearest
tradingcenter] group. Ineyo ndi volunteer wa zaumoyo anachita

kundisankha anthu am’mudzi:

- I am a volunteer about health, I was chosen by the people in the village.

Za May 2005, 6 July 2008

2. Azimayio ambiri amapanga geni azimuna ayi, amuna ambiri mowa, ambiri ndi mawaona
chifukwa ndimakhala nawi pafupi ndiye ndimaona khalidwe lawo, mwina ndi
chikhalidwe chawo. Ayi sizoona, eee azimai ambiri amaziymira pawokha:

- A lot of women are doing BS while men are not, a lot of men likes drinking beer, I saw
  a lot of them because I stay near by then am able to see their behaviour, may be it’s
  their culture. No! its not true, a lot of women are independent.

Zimakhala kuti zimayambika pachiyambi kuti apange chinthu chimakanika, ndiye mkazi
uja amavomera kuti mamuna adzingokhala, mwina amawona mavuto omwe akukumana
nawi, amuna akapeza ndalama mowa, lamulo amatha anthu amakambirana:

- it started from the past for them to do something they fail, when the wife used to agree
  that the husband should just stay, may be she can see some of the problems that she
  face, when the husband find money he spent on beer, a law, fear, some of them they
  discuss.

Ndichifukwa chake kuno kuli mbeta zambiri, mabanja ambiri amatha chifukwa cha nkhani
ngati zomwezi:

- that’s why here a lot of women are not married, a lot of marriages used to end because
  of the same stories.
Amachoka chifukwa ena amatha kumumenya mkazi uja kapena kumwa mowa kuti zimupweteke mkazi uja achoke:

- They move because others used to beat the wife or drinking a lot of beer so that the wife must feel pain and go.

4. Ena mankhwala: some use traditional medicine

5. chikhalidwe cha kuno ndi chovuta anthu samabisirana nkhani. Akamva nkhani m’malo moti asunge amakauza mwini wake, ena chifukwa cha chamba, mowa akafika kunyumba banja latha:

- The culture of here it’s difficult because people don’t hide stories. When they heard a story they don’t hide but they go and tell the owner of the story, others because of chamba, beer, when they come home they end the marriage.

**Single**: ineyo kukhala ndekha ndimapanga zinthu zaphindu kusiyana ndi omwe ali pa banja: when I am staying alone am able to do something very important more than those who are married.

**Adv**: ubwino ulipo koma chifukwa cha mavuto ena amene amapezeka, mumathandizana zinthu zina.

**Prob**: umamangika ukampanga zinthu, ntchito ndimagwira ndekha, monga kumunda kudula mitengo, kunenedwa ndiokumuza munthu wapabanja kuti andimangire denga, amati ndalama ndikuzitenga kuti ndiye kuti ukupanga uhule: there are some advantages but because of other problems that are found. You used to help each other in other things you are not free when doing something I do everything alone like farming, cutting down trees, being gossiped. When I tell a married man to make a new roof, they ask where I found money that means am a prostitute.

basi ndimangokhala, ndimati nthawi yawo imeneyo, ine ndimangopitiliza zomwe ndikuchita: I just stay and said that it’s their time, but I just continue doing what I always do.

Palibe - nothing.

Mwamuna zimamutsangalatsa uchitsiru chifukwa mwina amamupatsa ndalama: most men
used to be happy, just foolish, may be because they gave them money.

Chifukwa sitimatha kudziyimira patokha: because we don’t manage to depend on our own.

Ena umbuli, sitimaona zomwe anzathu akuchita, monga ngati geni timadikira wina abwere kuti atiuze chochita ife ndikumatsatira, tinazolowera: others because of ignorance, we don’t see what our friends are doing, for example BS we want for someone to come to tell us what to do, so that we can follow, we are just used.

Ndikuona kuti akamaona Madera ena momwe akuchitira bwenzi tikusinthika pang’ono pang’ono: I think if they could have seen other countries the way they do, we could have changed little by little.

Ineyo ndimalimbikira chifukwa ndimadziwa kuti ndikapanda kuchita ichi palibe yemwe angandipangire: I work hard because I know that if I cannot do it that means there is no-one else who can do it for me.

A 12 Teleza

2. pabanja magawo amasiyana, mkazi amatenga gawo losamala ana chifukwa mwamuna amatha kuchoka mam’mawa kubwera usiku ana atagona, ntcito abambo amagwira ntcito yambiri kumunda kusiyanana ndi mayi, kusiyanana kwina ndi mbali ya kudya - women take care of the children because men they leave in teh morning come back at night when the children are sleeping. Men work harder in the field then women.

3. mabanja ambiri zimasiyana, upeza kuti abambo akudywa mitanda 5, amayi itatu. Mabanja ena amapeza ndalama kwambiri ndi mkazi, mabanja ena amuna, nthawi zina zimakhala zoono koma mabanja ena ayi, mabanja ena mkazi amapanga geni koma mwamuna kungokhala, mkazi kumasamala banja: in many marriages there is a different, you will see that the husband is eating 5 portions, a wife 3. In other families a lot of women find money, sometimes it’s true but other families not, in other families women do BS while the husband is just staying, a woman taking care of the family.

4. kupempha kusiyanana - nayenso chimodzimodzi, nthawi zina zimasiyana, ena amakadandaula kwa ankhoswe, ngati sakusintha mwina kambiri. Ambiri amati bola tingosiyanana, akakhala pa chipembezo amapita ku tchalitchi akalephera amati iii tingobalalikapo: begging is different, the same as that one, sometimes there is a different, others go to complain to ankhoswe, if he is not changing for several times a lot of them say
it’s good to divorce others go to complain to church elders.

5. mantha; amuna ena amati ndidzakuloza ndiye ena amapilira amati ndikamuthamangitsa 
andilodza, koma samakhala kuti akusangalala pabanjapo ayi, amakhala ndi mantha amaopa 
kuwapha: they are afraid other men say that I will bewitch you then others they just accept 
saying that if I will chase him that means he will bewitch me.

6. zochita zawo, monga kwathu kuno akazi ofuna banja alipo koma amuna ena chamba - 
ena anangokwathira chifukwa choti wina wakwathira, popanda program, akalowa m’banja 
akaona kuti mulibe sopo amati iii ndapita. Miyezi iwiri basi banja latha, ena amakwatisira 
kuwapha: because of there doings, here in our village there are some women who wants 
marriage but some men like smoking chamba. Others they got married after seeing that 
someone is married without program. When they are in marriage and see that they don’t 
have soap, they say that I am going, after 2 months they divorce, others get married just 
copying from their friends.

Mavuto apakhomo.

6. sangafune mwamuna ngati zones akuzipeza koma vuto kwathu kuno ine nditha 
kumapanga geni anthunso kumaona kuti uyu akupeza chisamaliro yekha, akakuona 
kuti ukucheza ndi munthu amati iii akunyengana ndi uyo ndiye ambiri amazikakamiza 
kukhala pabanja kuti angochotsa paint imeneayo yoti ndi hule: they cannot need a 
husband if they are able to find anything, but the problem in our village is that; I can 
start a BS and everybody can know that am able to take care of of myself if they can see 
you chatting with someone else they say that you are in relationship with you and most 
of the women they force themselves to get married.

Kusowa chochita: they don’t have some thing to do.

Chifukwa munthu kukhala ndi chochita olo BS umakhala uli kumsika mamawa mpaka 
madzulo, utha kukhalanso ndi nthawi yamabodza? Dzuwa lonse pakhomo kenako umati 
ndikacheze wina akadutsa mumayamba mabodza

7. amuna akuno alibe manyazi (laughing) amati ndatola nkhwangwa ndi mpini womwe: 
here they are not ashamed.

Zimamupweteka chifikwa amamauti kuti udindo uli m’manja mwake komanso amamva 
gati iyeyo ndi mwamuna: It pains her because she used to see that she is the head of the 
family and she feels like she is a husband.
Ifeyo mwachibadwa timadzitenga kuti ndife ovutika zoti titha kupanga chintu china chake ndi kutukuka timaona ngati sitingathe: we think that we were born poor and we don’t know that if we can do something definitely we can improve we just see that we cannot manage.

Mabungwe poyamba pobwera paja amatha kubwera ndi mfundo zabwino zoti anthu akapeleke. Tiyerekeze ngati a CUMO amene anabwera kuno kudzapereka ngongole nthawi yomwe amawaphunzitsa anthu amawauza kuti ngongole yawo ndiyosavuta, ndiye ambiri anatengeka, anatenga ngongole anthu pomaliza anapezeka alibe chilichonse, zomwe anawaphunzitsa sizimafanana zinali zosiyana: At the beginning projects came with a good idea to attract people, for example CUMO who came here to give loan, when teaching people they told them that their loan is not difficult to pay back and many people got loan. When they found that they didn’t have anything. It was much different with what they taught them.

Amawauza kuti ngati yobweza yavuta, timavomera kuti udzabweze mulungu wina, koma anthu atatenga akanena kuti ndilibe amanena kuti sindichoka ndigona pompano pokhapokha ukafune ndalama utipatse ndiye anthu amagulitsa nkhuku kuti abweze, momwe anthu amamaliza ngongole alibe chiweto: they were telling them that: if you don’t have money to pay back, we accept that you will pay the other week that you will pay the other week, but when people got loan, when they say that I don’t have, they were saying that I will not go and I will sleep here unless you go and find the money then people were selling chickens inorder to pay back loan, at the end of the loan - no livestock.

Ee nditenga, tidzawona kutsogolo, chifukwa nawonso akuti yathuyi muzibweza pa mwezi kamodzi komanso tikupatsani mwezi umodzi osabwenza, mudzayamba winawo ndiye ife tinawapempha kuti tisayinilane komanso pakhale mboni monga SubT/A, zones zomwe alonjeza alembe pa pepala: - we will see in future because they are saying that you will be paying after a month, and we will also give you a month without paying back, we will start the second month and we begged them that they should sign what they said and there should be a witness like SubT/A [small crossroads market] they must write everything that they promised on the paper.

A 13 Thokozani

2. kuno anthu amakhala bwino, azimai timachita zomwe azimai akuchita mwina kutunga madzi, kuphika, kusamala ana, azibambo manyumba, kupita kunkhuni, azibambo kupita kuntu chito timathandizira pakhomo. Manyumba, carpenter (laughing):
- people are staying properly here, women do what other women are doing, may be fetching water, cooking, taking care of children, men building houses, going to fetch firewood, men going to work somewhere and find everything that we want, carpenter.

3. kuno azimai ambiri ndi a geni ndiye ali nazo: here a lot of women used to do business and they have got money.

4. ena akatopa amapita kwa ankhoswe kuti absinthe, ena ku court, akazi ena akalephera limatha, abambonso amapita kwa ankhoswe koma ambiri amasiyana: others when they are tired they go to ankhoswe to make him change, others at court, other women when they fail all of these they end marriage - others go to ankhoswe, others divorce.

5. chifukwa cha umphawi, olo ndimuthamangitse mwamunayu zina amachita zambiri zabwino ndiye amapilira:

- because of poverty, and if I can chase this husband they are a lot of things that is good to me, then she just accept.

6. azimai a kuno samafuna kuti mwamuna avutike, okonda ndalama ndimomwe ndawonera, mwamuna akakhala kuti alibe kanthu amamuthamangitsa:

- most of the women here they don’t want a husband to be poor, they just like money, if the husband does not have money they used to chase him.

7. amatsata chilengedwe ena samatha kungokhala ku-------- (laughed): they follow nature, others they don’t manage to (without sex) (not completed).

8. mwina amagwirizana kuti azipanga geni mwina amapeza mkazi akupanga kalegeni ndiye zimawavuta kuti asiyi ndiye amapitiliza:

- may be they discuss to start BS or else he found her already doing BS and it’s difficult to stop her and she used to continue.

9. sindinanganizepo koma mwina kusowa ndalama kuti agule feteleza kuti akhale ndi zakudya zokwanira kapena kusowa minda kuti a;lime zogulitsa:

- I have never thought about it but may be no money to but fertilizer inorder to have a lot
of food or no enough field to grow crops for sale.

Anthu sindinawaonepo kuno: I have never seen them here.

Mabungwe amabwera koma sizimawonetsa mphamvu ndikumapita: some of them they came and go but without benefit.

Mabungwe ndi ambiri akabwera akapita basi: a lot of projects but when they come they just go.

**A 14 Rosemary (yao)**

2. Asumusye litonji basi kumwa mkologo basi pelepa wangali: the husband already harvested cotton and spent the money in drinking beer.

Msagule chile chitenje chenu apa basi kaneko kusigale kulemba: you must choose your chitenje here then she will come to register you.

(Rosemary telling Dora) kwana yejinji kunyumba: there are a lot at home.

(Gertrude telling Dora) ngwala ngasose mbonga: I am going to fetch some relish.

Litonji wasyumisye pangali anta limo ata likobili nganamba, nalimire tomato nambo ata mbiya:

- he already sold his cotton and he didn’t give me his money, I helped him growing tomatoes but he sold himself.

Ngati wandesile ulombele ngakuwusaka jaje kumangwenu: he left me alone, he said I should go back home.

Akusaka alyeje jikape induyo: his aim was to eat alone what they harvested.

Pelepa akusaka awujire nimatesile kuti iyayi manya: he came and said that he wants to come back but I told him that I don’t want.

Apano asumisye iliyonse yakwete imanga: as of now he has already sold everything
including maize.

Yakuwala ya mbweteyi mpwanga juli ku Balaka ni wambere skirt ni malaja nambo une walombere walime: even these clothes I received from my sister at Balaka, I have failed to buy myself, but I have a husband and we grow some.

Une ngangusang’anda niwandu, basi gambagu kupeleka moni m’jimwiche basi pangali mayi: I don’t have some friends here but we just greet each other, nothing!

3. Achalume wakwe wapi, akuno kwangali achalume mwine wali ku SA une ngagwawonatu achalume akuno: here we don’t have men some of them are in SA and may be they have got money there.

4. Wane ma BS (others BS) akuti akala apiti alidiwapaya wandu mbiya tambala wajigalanga concern wee ngani tuyiche: they say in the past Amila was giving loan to some women from concern universal before I came (not clear).

Basi kulekangana mpela une: they divorce just like what I did.

Kwali ni pelepo: I don’t know.

5. Ipali yakusayiwona ikusasalalira, pana yine yambone: there are some of the things that husband do to please the wife.

6. Kwalinini asyene: I don’t know.

7. Mama kulaga, kuti mwine yine chawombole we niwanjawo: because of poor thinking that he will help her. Angamusye nyumba, kupala kulwala nobola kuloTradingcenter: inorder to build a house, in hunger season helping each other and if you are ill you need someone to help taking care.

8. Nguwona ikusanonyela kwalinini: they are used to be happy - I don’t know, une BS nganindende: I have never done BS, ngusagamba kulima: I just work in the field.

[Rosemary]

Makolo gawune gawile kalakala nakusile nimama wanondi, nombo welewo mabosa nakalaga nayiche akuno, kutila mabosa: my parents died some yrs ago, and I was staying with my young mother but she liked gossiping that’s why I runned from there coming to this village.
Yineyi ngulepela kwanga: some of the things am failing to answer.

9. ee ngusatama nili mkuliusya kuti ana kulagakuuli: yes I used to ask myself why we are poor.

Ngati ngakupata kupatako kulaga basi: we are poor or she is poor then where can she go.

Ku Malawi kuno kuti ngalima nibasi tumonga, litonji kusumisyamo basi kukusapata utendere m'majumba mbale, kuwala, akuno kwawona nijamanja:

- in Malawi if you are not working in the field like maize, cotton and sale that means we don’t find peace but if you grow crops and sale, that means you will buy plates, clothes.

A 15 Emra

2. kuumba zidina: making bricks

3. Ayi azimayi amapanga geni: No women do BS.

4. kutha banja - amanyamuka: end marriage - and leave.

Iweyo umalephera umayesetsa kuti absinthe koma amakana, akamapanga zimenezo umawauza kuti asiye: we fail, we try to make them change but they refuse, when they are doing that, we tell them to stop.

4. Basi umphawi omwewu umati anthu adziti uli pa banja: because of poverty, they say that people should say that she is married.

5. Tsoka la kwa Mudzi B, mavuto am’mbanja kusiyana mwina ena kumabereka ana aja kumamwalira, mwamuna uja amachoka amati ndikawone zina: unlucky of Mudzi B, we have got different problems in our marriage, others give birth to children and they don’t stay alive, then the husband used to say that I am going to another wife to see some changes

6. Ena amasangalala ena samasangalala: others used to be happy while others not.

Amawawona kupusa amunawo: they see that you are foolish.
Sindikudziwa kuti kuno ndi chani. Kuno samathandiza: I don’t know why, but here they don’t help.

A 16-17 GVH

2. Azimayi ambiri amalimbikira kumadzi, kusesa, kuyang’ana ndiwo, kuganiza kuti pabanja Pamela adya chain, mwamuna amangoganiza zoti apite kumunda alime, abwere akhale kuyembekezera mkazi atenge madzi ampatse mwamuna asambe, ampatse chakudy a dye aziyendayenda, mkazi kukumbukira chakudy a cha madzulo, mwamuna akabwera adya chain:

- most of the women work hard in fetching water, sweeping, fetching some relish, thinking what the children will eat, a husband think of going to the field to cultivate, when they come back home they just stay waiting for the wife to give him some water to wash his body, give him some food to eat to be moving around. A wife thinking what to eat in the evening, what will the husband eat.

3. Abambo amapeza ndalama, amalima ena amapanga BS yoyenda kutali kutali. Ena nsomba, koma mkazi amatanganidwa pa khomo ndi ana. Sangathe kupita kunyanja mpaka ku Lilongwe, makolo ena amafa ndikukhalala ana okha ndikumabereka ana, apanga BS:

- men find money through farming, others BS in different places, others fish, but a woman used to be busy at home taking care of children. She cannot go to the lake up to Lilongwe, other parents die and live their children to take care of themselves. Can they do BS?

4. limatha banja - amamusiya mkazi: they divorce - they leave the wife.

5. Ena amakhalira kupilira chifukwa cha ana sangathe kusamala wokha: others they just accept what the husband is saying because they cannot manage to take care of children.

6. (phone ringing) amuna ambiri akazi ochepa. Mavuto ku Malawi uwu utendewe wanachewa wa achibaba wawo, chiwerere chikutupa ligongo lyangalombera, akusatenda kuti apate njete alye wanache ugali. Nanga ukwati amafunsira mkazi:

- A lot of women and few men, a lot of problems in Malawi, even these children here (kids surrounded) they don’t have their fathers, alot of prostitutes because a lot of women are not married, they do this inorder to find salt to feed the children, can a woman propose?
7. Ayi, ndinayitanidwa kwa a SubT/A kuti azungu amene aja akupopani magazi, pano talandira chovala amafuna kuti tikhale aumphawi, ameneyu ndi mulungu, andiitana kawiri, zikanakhala zitenje ziwi ndikanawapatsa chimodzi, mtsikanayo akanabisa chifukwa ndi bwana wake nditenga chithunzi ndikawaonetse:

- No! I was called by SubT/A [small crossroads market] that; the white woman who came in your village wants to take blood, as of now we have received cloths, he wanted us to be still poor, this is God who have done this, he called me twice, if I had 2 pieces of zitenje, I could have given him 1 piece, that girl can hide because she is her boss, I will take the picture to show him.

Kale anthu amapeza bwino chifukwa zolimazi pabanja paliponse zimakwanila, pakali pano anthu atha kumwalira panopa azimayi akupeza bwino chifukwa akulima chimanga cha hybrid, kuthira fertilizer, kenako akugulitsa ndikuyambira BS:

- In the past people were getting better because every family were growing enough food, nowadays women are better off because they are growing hybrid maize, applying fertilizer, then they sell and start BS.

Anthu samalimbirana kulima malo olima alibe okwanira: they don’t work hard in farming because they don’t have enough place to cultivate.

A 18-19 Amila

2. Banja la ine sizikusiyana ndi kukhala mbeta chifukwa chilichonse chikuyang’ana ine, kunutchini, njala ndimafuna ndekha, chakudy, chimbudzi ndekha, mchere panopa ndikumagula chimanga ndikumadya ndi ana kuti ndisiyanitse sindikudziwa koma amai amushe chifukwa choti anapereka dzina kwa mwana wanga basi anampatsa blanket. Poyamba timangogona mphasa ndapangitsa panopa:

- In my family there is no different with the one who is marred, because am doing everything on my own, maizemill, in hunger season I found food myself, toilet myself, salt, as of now I am buying maize for food and eat with children. To make a different I don’t know, but Blessings because she gave my daughter a name, then she took a blanket and gave it to her, at first we were just sleeping on the floor as of now I bought a mat.

Poyamba ndimapanga geni yachinangwa, kenako zitumbuwa kuti mwana avinidwe pano ndikumapanga geni yamizimbe, ndinakongola 200 ndikuyamba geni: At first I was doing a BS of selling cassava, later on zitumbuwa, in order to initiate my son, as of now am doing
a BS of selling sugarcane, I went to borrow 200mk to start a business [Amila].

3. Kulimbikira ganyu,kulima mumsewu, ena ku John, amuna ananga amandipempha makobili a fodya: working hard in ganyu, working at masaf others going to SA, my husband was begging me some money for tobacco.

Ena amakana kuchita geni akutani anthu wokwatira asamachite geni ife anthu ambiri amatisika, tsono pokoli chilichonse ganyu ndi chifukwa chake ndikumaoda mizimbe, kubwera kuno madzulo, leronso ndipita ndikagulitsa ndikudikira inuyo. Ndimagulitsa ku grocery ndimapita lolemba mpaka lamulungu:

- others they refuse to do a BS, they say those who are married are not supposed to do BS. A lot of them laugh at me because I don’t want to depend on ganyu that’s why am buying sugarcane and sell, coming back in the evening. Even today I will go and sell, I am waiting for you to finish, I sell at the grocery I used to go from Monday to Sunday.

4. limatha - munthu uja akamukhazika pansi ngati sakusintha limatha, ena amapita kwa a mfumu, ndinakanena kwawo ndiye anawauza kuti absinthe, pano sakukhala pakhomo akuchita manyazi:

- They divorce - they sit down and discuss with him but if he is not changing they divorce, others they went to the chief, like my husband he went to the chief. I told his relatives and he was told to change, as of now he is not staying at home he is ashamed.

Ndikulephera kupita ku tchalitchi chifukwa chosowa zovala: Am failing to go to church because I don’t have enough clothes [Amila].

5. Amawayitanira a kwawo - ena kukambirana, ena ukwati umatha: they call his relative, some of them discuss while others end marriage.

6. Kumakhala kupilira, ine ndakhala zaka 17 kumaona mavuto koma chaka chino ndiye zawonjeza, njerwa ndimaumba ndekha, madzi ndekha, kumanga waganyu, denga ndinawauza anthu, ndalama zake za chinangwa. Panopa kumaliro sindipita sindinachape:

-They just accept anything, I have stayed for 17 years, facing some problems but this year it’s too much, I was making bricks alone, I hired someone to build a house even the roof, the money from selling cassava. As of now I don’t want, up to 20 yrs, and [I will not go to attend a funeral because I didn’t wash my clothes – there is a funeral today].
Mavuto kuti uchite chibwenzi umatenga matenda ndiye ana amazunzika: because of problems, to have a boyfriend you will get diseases, then kids will get troubles.

7. Ayi, ena akakhala ndi chinyerenyere amafuna amuna opanda chinyerenyere amangokhala: No! when others have got a desire they want men, but those who don’t have a desire they just stay.

8. Gertrude ambiri amakhala mahule, akawona kuti munyumba mulibe mchere ololo ndiwo ndiye amachita chibwenzi kumakagona ndi amuna ena, ena samatha kudyera mbale yobooka: most of them are prostitutes, when they see that they don’t have relish, they have a boyfriend, and have sex with other men, others don’t manage to eat using a licking plate:

Amuna ake omwewa amalandanalandana: The same men in the village they just exchange door to door and doing sex.

Amachita kufunsiridwa amakhala akuyesa akawona kuti ndi hule osakana amuna amabwerabwera kenako agone nawe. Akupita ku maliro (Fissa) koma ndawagaila nandolo akuti adzandibwezera:

- They used to proposed, they tempt you and when they see that you are a prostitute they come often, later on they have sex with you. She is going to the funeral (Fissa) but I gave her pigeon pea she said she will give me back.

Kwathu kuno kopangira geni ndi kutali komanso ukachita geni anthu amakuseka, kungokhala sibwino. Anthu amafuna udziwapempha mchere, kuntchini, koma ine sindikusiya. Panopa amandiseka geni ya mizimbe:

- in our village we go very far to do Bsand if you are doing BS most of the people laugh, just staying it’s not good they want you to beg them salt, maizemill but am not stopping. As of now they laugh at me for the BS of sugarcane.

Ukachita geni samasangalala, makamaka ndikagula matemba amaseka amafuna kuti uzipanga ganyu: when you are doing BS they are not happy, they want you to be doing ganyu.

A 20 Hilda
2. Timapita kumadzi, kusesa mnyumba, ndiwo, kuphika madzi amuna, kulima. Amuna amakafuna ndalama, kulima, kumanga nyumba, bafa, chimbudzi:

- We fetch water, sweeping in the house, relish, boiling water for the husband, working in the field, men go to fetch money, farming, building house, bathroom, toilet.

3. Amalima maganyu: they go for casual labour.

Amakalima koma kusiyana, amuna ndi amphamvu: they work in the field but in different way because men are strong.

4. Ena amakambirana, ngati alephera banja limatha: they used to discuss and if they have failed they divorce. Amayenera kumusiya: he is supposed to divorce.

5. Ena amakhala kuti munthuyu wachoka naye kutali, mwakhala zaka zambiri ndiye olo ndimuthamangitse alowera kuti: others stayed together for a long period of time then they think that if I will chase him! Where is he going to stay.

6. Osagwirizana (because of some disagreements) kwamakhalidwe, ena amuna amalephera kusamala pakhomo, ndiye mkazi uyu amati bola banja lithe: according to behaviour, some men fail to take care of the family and most of the women used to say that it’s good to end marriage.

7. Palibe umakhala mbeta: nothing you stay alone without getting married. Chifukwa chithandizo chonse chikupezeka: because you are able to find everything.

Banja umakwatira chifukwa cha mavuto: you get married because of problems.

Ayi chimufukwa amazipangira payekha: no because she depends on her own.

Ena amasangalala koma ena ayi amati chisamaliro akundipatsa: others used to be happy while others not they say that at list she is providing what I want.

Kaya amaona ngati zikuchokeza kwa amuna ena: I don’t know! May be they think that the money is coming from another man.

8. Masiku ano azimayi akupanga geni kale kunalibe koma kutibula basi: nowadays
Women are doing BS while in the past they were just pounding by hand.

Panopa basi kukongoza ndalama kale kunalibe: as of now at least people are taking loan while in the past not.

Mwina ifeyo sitikulimbikira ndi chifukwa chake tili osauka, mwina kulima: may be we are not working hard that’s why we are poor, may be farming.

A 21 Pamela

2. Kunoko umphawi wachuluka, azibambo amapeza ganyu ndikumagwila, pomwe ifeyo kuti tikalime munda wa munthu ndikovuta, chifukwa azimayi timakwanitsa kupalira: here there is a lot of poverty and men used to find ganyu while women it’s difficult to go and work in someone’s field because we just manage weeding.

Zomwe zimachitika mzimayi amakhala pakhomo, kenako kubwera mzibambo amai ndikukufunani, ndikuwalola mawa mtendo mwina wakusiya uli pa mavuto akulu - mwina kupita kwina kukafunsira iwe kukusisiya: what happens is that a woman stay at home then a man comes to propose you, then you accept, later on may be they leave you and get married to another one.

Azimayi sitingakwanitse chifukwa timadikira kufunsiridwa pomwe azibambo akamupeza munthu pa msewu amamufunsira: we can not manage because we just want to be proposed while men when they found someone on the way they propose.

Zimenezo ndizimene zimachitika kunoko, ifeyo tilibe mbali yofunsira, kuti tchoke pano tikafunsire mamuna amati hule: that is what happens here, we don’t have part to propose, if we can go and propose a man, people say that you are a prostitute.

3. Ambiri amalimbikira ulimi, azimayi ndichinthu chovuta kupanga mpikisano ndi azibambo, geni ya tomato: a lot of women it’s difficult to compete with men. BS of tomatoes.

Pali abambo kumapanga geni mzimayi geni zimayenda bwino, koma azibambo ena amati geni usamachite, zomwe zisali zabwino: in other families all of them do BS and it’s good while other men they don’t accept a wife to do BS which is not good.

Azibambo ena amaganiza kuti mkazi akapita ku geni akapeza amuna ena amakayikirana: others don’t trust each other they think that if a woman will go to BS that means she will
meet with some men.

Ena alipo azimayi olimbikira koma komwe chimachitika, mpamba ndiwosowa: they are other women who work hard but what happens is that it’s difficult to find capital.

Kusowa kotenga ndalama, pakanakhala kuti pali ngoingole zomwe anthu amatenga poyamba, bwenzi akuyamba geni: nowhere to take money but if it was possible to take loan like what others did in the past they could have start BS.

Ndanena kale kuti mzibambo atha kukafunsira ganyu, kulima kaya njerwa pomwe ife njerwa sitingaumbe: as I have already said that men find money through ganyu farming or making bricks, but we cannot manage.

4. Umamumasula chifukwa tsiku lina uzapeza mavuto. Ndibwino kukhala wekha: we divorce because one day you will find some problems and it’s good to stay alone.

Pali ndi anthu ake amuna ena ngati sakutsangalatsidwa ndi khalidwe la mkazi, ena amauzana koma ena amangonyamuka kumapita: it depend other men if they are not happy with others they discuss while others they just go.

Mwamuna ndiyemwe amafulumira kuthetsa banja, komanso mkazi ngati zikumupwetteka amathetsa: especially men they are quicker to end the marriage but even women if they feel pain they end marriage.

Iweyo ulibe udindo/mphamvu yaikulu kuposa mzibambo: because we don’t have responsibility/power more than men.

5. Mkaziyo anazolowera zochita za mwamunayo: a woman is used to the behaviour of a man.

6. chifukwa cha zochitika ndi khalidwe lathu pali ena makhalidwe awo amati tinasayinirana mpaka kufa, koma kunoko khalidwe lake sizingachitike, monga ifeyo atsikana takwatisana, tsiku lina pamapezeka chinthu chakunyasa ndiye umati lonjexo lija silingathetheke: because of our behaviour others in their behaviour they said that we signed till death but here it can not happen for example we girls we are married and in the family there is something bad that makes you not happy, then you say the promise cannot be fulfilled.

7. Ayi pamenepa komwe ukufuna chikukwanilitsidwa sungakwatre, ngakhale
kunalembeda kuti tidzikhala awiriwiri ngati akuwona kuti geni ikuyenda sungafune banja umangokhala. Koma ndi ana omwe amakuzzolowera, kenako anthu amati amene uja ndi ana omwe akupanga nawo zibwenzi, kuyambira 15, ana amasiku ano sakuopa akulu olo wapabanja amati bola ndikanakhala ine:

- No! at that time you are able to find what you want. You cannot get married, it was written that we should stay 2, two (in the bible) if you can see that, in BS you get everything, you can’t need a husband, you just stay, but even young children they get used to you (no respect) then some people say that: she is even in relationship with young from 15 yrs, young boys of today they are not afraid of elders even if you are married they say that (if it was me (meaning that he can do more than your husband).

8. Ngati muli mwamuna mnyumba amakusiyitsa zomwe ukupanga amati zones ndizichita ena 2-3 days amalephera lamulo liposo mphamvu mwamuna ndi mutu wa banja: if you have got a husband they stop you what you are doing, they say that I will provide everything, after 2-3 days they fail, a law - a husband is the head of the family.

9. Timayendera kuti uyo akapanga chakuti andigayira, tikanakhala kuti timalimbikira zinthu zikanasintha: we just wait for someone to help us if we work hard, things could have changed.

Malingan ndi khalidwe kubwera wina kuti ndili ndi ganyu amati ayi ndikamupangire ameneyo, timadikira munthu abwere atiuze: according to our behaviour if someone comes to ask if you can do ganyu we say I cannot go there and work in her house. We wait for someone to tell us.

Timaganizira kuti akatiyesa amphawi: we think that people will say that we are poor.

A 22-23 Dora

2. Azibambo amamanga nyumba, kupita ku ntchito kaya Jubeki, mwamuna akatalikira timapanga geni, kumathandiza ana pakhomo soap, kumunda kumalima, zimbudzi denga mkazi sangakwanitse mulungu momwe analengera kuti kukhale amuna komanso akazi kuti zina azipanga amuna zina akazi:

- Men build houses, going to work somewhere like in SA, if the husband is very far we do BS and help our children e.g soap, men working in the field, making toilet roof, a woman cannot manage. It’s the way how God created that men should do this and a woman should do this.
3. Amaposa! Koma azimayi ena ndiwolimbikira, chifukwa amuna ena amakhala aulesi, osadziwa kusamala pakhomo: it’s true but other women works very hard because other men are lazy. They don’t know how to take care of the family.

4. Timapita kwa ankhoswe kukawauza kuti sitikugwirizana pakhomo kaya waulesi, sagula chakudya, njala ikabwera akalephera timakadula samani kwa a mfumu- zimakhala chimodzimodzi mwamuna amapita kukafunsira mkazi kwina kuti ndikaone khalidwe lina:

- we go to ankhoswe to tell him what is going on in the family, if he is lazy not buying food in hunger season, if they have failed we go to the chief to ask a letter to divorce - it’s just the same but men go to propose another wife inorder to see another behaviour.

5. Mwina ena amasangalala ndi zomwe mwamuna akuchita, ena amakhala otola zakuba ndiye akazi ena zimawasangalatsa, koma mkazi woti sakudziwa zakubazo umamuthamangitsa kuti ayi ndikhala mbeta ena amabwera kudzakukwatira:

- May be others used to be happy with the behaviour that the husband is doing, others (husband) are thieves and other wives used to be happy when the husband is coming with something at home. But for the wife who don’t know how to steal, you can chase him and stay alone not getting married.

Chifukwa ndi mwamuna anackoka kwa amayi awo kudzakukwatira ndikubereka ana amafuna atulutse mphatso. Nanga amayi awo angatulutse ana? Basi chilengedwe momwe mulungu analengera kuti mkazi akhale ndi mwamuna:

- because he is a man who moved from his parents, to marry me, and give birth to children, they want to produce gifts (meaning children) his mother can produce children from him? It’s just nature, according to how God created a woman should have a husband.

Mwamuna sangamve kanthu, chifukwa mwina ukumpatsa madzi, kumuphikira nsima, koma amene akupanga zimenezo umamva kuwawa kuti mwamunayu ndidzingomuphukira, anachoka kwao kwa amayi ake, kuti adzindithandiza vuto lapakhomo, kusamala Pamela, kundisamala ine:

- A man can just accept [you doing BS] because may be you give him some water, cooking for him (nsima) but the one who is providing everything feels pain, that the husband is just staying, just cooking for him, he moved from his parents to help me in all my needs taking care of children and me.
(First laughed) maganizo kusiyana ena amamuthamangitsa mwamuna uja ena amati bolani akundipatsa Pamela: we think differently others chase the husband while others say that at least he is giving me children.

(Why children) mulungu ndi amene amapereka mphatso, ife timangozipeza kuchokera kwa makolo athu: God is the one who gives these gift.

Ambiri timazolowera, makolo athu anazolowera, akuti kalelo makolo athu amavala kaya chain? Ukapolo siudzatha chifukwa tikalima ulimi sizikuyenda, pano thonje lili mnuyumba, pomwe ena amaganiza kuti apite kwina kukapanga geni koma akulephera:

- we are just used, our parents got used, in the past our parents were putting on what! What? Our slavery will not end because although we are farming but it is not helping, as of now we are just keeping our cotton, while others were thinking that they will go somewhere else to do BS but they have failed.

Ena amabwera kudzatilemba maina a ana, amagonama kuti chithandizo chibwera koma osabwera. Timangolembetsa chifukwa amachokera kutali, timaganiza kuti atinthandiza: others come inorder to register our children, they just cheat that they will come or send a support but they don’t come. We just register because they come from far, we think that they will help.

A 24-25-26-27 Alma

2. Azibambo ena alipo abwino, ena alipo ankhanza amayinso alipo abwino ena ankhanza chifukwa aliyense ali ndi mtima wakewake, inu mungadziwe zomwe zili mumtima mwanga?

- They are other men who are good, others abuse and other women are also good others abuse, because we have got different hearts. Can you know what is in my heart?


- when others arrive at a certain place they show interest being happy with everybody whom they find. Chatting with children and we say that she/he is a good person not a dog no! but others act like dogs you can’t like them. After asking them a question they

- Men do their own things and women do their own things. Building a house, making a maize storage, digging a toilet, farming. Other women are lazy they just stay without doing anything staying alone without a husband they cheat that they are ill when people are working in the field, but when a man comes to marry her she starts getting better inorder to be helped working in the field. But other women like me (name Alma) I do everything on my own like farming, asking someone to build a house for me, when you are just staying! Can problems be solved?

3. kagwilidwe ka ntchito ena amakonda kulima thonje lambiri akagulitsa amapeza ndalama zambiri, ena amalima mbewu zambiri monga mtedza, chimanga, akagulitsa amapeza bwino. Chitsanzo nyumba iyi malata awa sanachokere kuntchito koma kulima basi:

- Others like growing a lot of cotton after selling they have a lot of money, others grow a lot of crops like g/nuts, maize after selling they get better. For example this house the iron sheets came from farming only.

Azimayi ena amalima kuposa azibambo koma ena aulesi ali pa umbeta amati ndikudwala anzake akulima, akabwe ra mamuna wachila, amafuna mamunayo kuti amuthandize (laughing).

- Other women work hard in the field than men, but others are lazy, when they are not married they say am ill while their friends are working in the field, when the man comes to propose they get better, she wants him to help her in the field.

4. Kutha ukwati - chimodzimodzi banja limapasuka, chifukwa banja ndi chikondi, palibe mankhwala basi kutha. Olo kukambirana zimakanika akafika pakhomo amasinthu ndiye timati kafikeni bwino bamboo. Basi njira yake ndi yomweyo yolekana chifukwa m’banja ngati mulibe mtendere, chikondi, limatha sungamukakamizhe mwamuna mwin a ngati zumuwawa mwamuna amathetsa, ngati zumuwawa mkazi amathetsa ukwati:
They end marriage - just the same marriage end, because marriage is love, there is no medicine, they just end marriage, even after discussing you fail, when he comes at home he used to change his mind and we tell them to have a nice journey. The only way is to divorce, because if there is no peace in marriage, no love, the marriage end, you can’t force the husband, sometimes if the husband feels pain he ends the marriage. Even if the wife feels pain, she ends the marriage.

5. kuwopa kuti ndikamuthamangitsa ndivutika, kapena muli china chimene chikumutsangalatsa, ena amakhala ankhanza koma mwina amatha kusamala ana, banja kulisamala, akayenda pobwera kuwatsangalatsa ana pakhomo, ndiye umapilira chifukwa pali zina zabwino:

- we used to be afraid that if I will chase him it will be difficult to take care of myself, or else there is something that please you and you can’t chase him, others abuse but they are able to take care of children and the family, after moving around he comes back and chat with the children and you just accept.

6. kusagwirizana, ena kumangomwa mowa, kulima osathandizana mkazi osamuveka, ntchito pakhomo osagwira:

- because of some disagreement, just drinking beer, not even helping in farming, not buying clothes for the wife. At home just staying without helping in other things.

7. Ayi sangafune, une ukwati unatha kalekale mpaka pano ndikukalamba ndikukhala ndekha ndimangidzilamulira, ndiye chain, sindidya, nanga alipo woti angandifunse?:

- No she can’t need marriage my marriage ended and now am just staying getting old now. When I am staying alone I just decide what to eat, either I will not eat, is there anyone else who can ask me?

Single- ee timakumana ndi mavuto monga nyumba yagwa umafuna mamuna ngati ulibe ndalama ndiye kuti ukhala ndi nyumba, alipo, koma siambiri panali mayi dimba amamanga nyumba koma anamwalira, amathanso kufolera denga nkholwe, ena alipo. Sindikudziwa komwe anaphunzira, koma chifukwa cha mavuto amaona ena m’mene amapangira ayi sitimaseka koma timati ali ndi mwayi, umphamvu kusiyana ena ndi aulesi:

- Yes we face some problems for example; if the house collapsed you will need a husband, but if you don’t have money can you have a house. They are some but not many, there was mother of Mr Dauda she was able to buid a house, but she died, she
was also able to make a roof, maize storage, there are some who knows how to do this. I don’t know where she learned, but because of problems, she saw how other people were doing, no we were not laughing but we were saying that she was lucky, we were different others weak while others just lazy.

8. Ee zimamutsangalatsa chifukwa akulephera: ndaneana kale kuti pamakhala zina zomutsangalatsa mkaziyo, amapanga zina zoipa koma zina zabwino kungopilira basi:

- Yes he is happy because he is failing, I have already said that there is something that please the wife, and others bad, we just accept.

Madzi timatunga kutali, komanso kumsika ndikutali, mafumu akuno ndi oipa, monga ine ndiwamkulu amatilemba koma zinthu zija zikabwera amagawana wokha ndikumadya, monga ngati zomwe mwatengazi mukanawapatsa amfumu kuti atipatse sakanatipatsa. Othandiza akufuna kuthandiza koma mafumu:

- We fetch some water very far, even the market is very far, chiefs of this village are bad, for example am the elder one, they used to write down our names but if they receive something to give some people, they just share among themselves and eat. Even what you have brought here, if you thought of giving to the chief to give us, we could have not received, those who help wants to help but the problem is chiefs.

9. Singing; mway mwayi wanzama ofukura ndi manja khasu lilipo (clapping hands) nazitele nazitele bwenzi zikoma mwaona mwaona ku Malawi mwaona kunyada mwaona:

- We are lucky and lucky like digging nuts with our hands while a hoe is there (clapping hands). She said these words because she was happy with what she received.

A 28 Christina

2. Azibambo amagwira pa denga, mwina nyumba, azimayi timatunga madzi kapena kuphika, kwinako sinditha kuyankha:

- Men are able to make a roof, may be a house, women we fetch some water, sometimes cooking, others will not manage to answer.

3. Ee ndi zoonu! Mzibambo amapanga ganyu pomwe ife timanyozera timati sitingapite kuganyu:
- Yes it’s true because some men used to move around finding ganyu while women we don’t do it we say we cannot go for ganyu.

Basi mphwayi koma munthu akakhala kuti ndiwolimbikira umatha kuima pawekha: because of laziness but if we can work hard, that means you can do things independently.

4. Amapita kwa ankhoswe kukakambirana nkhani koma ngati sizikutheka amasiyana: They go to ankhoswe to complain and discuss, but if he is not changing they divorce.

Amapanga chimodzimodzi kupita kwa ankhoswe ngati sakusintha amapita kukakwatira mkazi wina: They do the same going to ankhoswe if she is not changing they and marry another wife.

Ambiri ndi azibambo, nanga si mzimayi amayendala lamulo la mamuna, pomwe mwamuna chomwe amaganiza chimakhala chomwecho:

- A lot of them [who divorce] are men, because the wife used to follow what the husband is saying, while most of the husband he don’t change his mind.

Chifukwa chilengedwe mamuna ndi mutu wa banja ndiye timvera: Because it’s nature and the husband is the head of the family then we listen to them.

Azimayi akakhala m’banja amadalira mzibambo kaya wasowa mchere umatha kumuuza mzibambo. Olo nthawi yanjala umamuza kuti ufa watha: When a woman is married we take the husband as the head of the family- we depend on him. If you don’t have salt, you tell the husband even in hunger season you tell him that we have finished ufa.

5. Nanga olo ndimuthamangitse ndipanga chain, umavutioka ndiye umati bola ndidzikhala nayebe, umati olo ulakwitse pali zina amapanga zabwino: Even if I will chase him what am I going to do, you find some problems, then you say that it’s good just to stay with him you say that, although he is doing some mistakes, other things are good.

6. Masiku ano amuna akuthamanga kwambiri ndi akazi: Nowadays a lot of men are moving around a lot with women.

Mwina chilipo chomwe amaona kwa azimayi, mwina amatHamra umve sakukwanitsa zomwe ndikufuna: May be there is something that he saw from women, may be they run
away from their dirtness, she is not able to do what he likes.

7. Azimayi tili mitundu iwiri ena amati sindingathe kugona ndekha popanda mamuna,
koma kwa ine sivuto kumakhala ndekha. Palibe chomwe chingandipangitse kufuna
banja - mwina ali ndi mavuto omwe ine sindingadziwe:

- We are two different kinds of women some of them say that I cannot manage to sleep
alone without a husband, but to me, there is no problem to stay alone. there is nothing
else that can make me to get married, may be they have got problems that I cannot
know.

8. Amakhala ndi manyazi, chifukwa anthu amati m’nyumba muja abambo akungokhala:
they used to be ashamed [when wife does BS] because some people say that in such a
house a husband is just staying.

9. Sindikudziwa chifukwa chake: I don’t know the reason.

A 29

2. kumanga nkholwe, khola, bafa, chimbudzi mzimaiy kuphika, kutunga madzi,
kuyang’ Pamela nkuni komanso kusamala ana kwaphikira, kuwachapila, mwina ndi
momwe mulungu analenger:

- Making maize storage, kraal, bathroom, toilet a woman cooking, fetching water, fetching
firewood and taking care of children, washing their clothes, may be is the way how God
created.

3. Azimayi tilibe ntchito yogwira, timangosamala ana pakhomo, sitimapita kukafuna
ntchito mwamuna ndi amene amapita kukagwira ganyu, ndikumapeza ndalama:

- Women we don’t have job to do but we just take care of children we don’t go to find
job, only men go to ganyu and find money.

4. Umapita kwa ankhoswe - chimodzimodzi ngati ukufuna amapita kwa ankhoswe -
ambiri ndi azibambo omwe amathetsa banja amakhala atawona mkazi wina. Mwina
azimai kupilira, kuyendera mwambo wa makolo kuti iyai usamapange zimenezo banja
ndiloyamba. Ndiye umangokhala kuti akusiye yekha. Mwina amakhulupilira kuti
kukwairakwatira sikwabwino koma ukhale ndi mwamuna m’modzi - masiku ano kuli matenda komanso kubala ana uyu bamboo wina uyu bamboo wina sizabwino - chifukwa wina uja akabwera amakhala ndi nkhanza kwa ana aja:

- You go to ankhoswe - just the same if he likes you he also go to ankhoswe, most of them are men who end marriage. At that time it means to saw another woman somewhere may be because women we just accept. We just follow the rules from our parents that; no! don’t do that, this is your first marriage, then you just stay in order to leave you himself, may be they believe that changing husband is not good but to have one husband only - nowadays there is a disease, and also giving birth to a lot of children with different husbands is not good because if another new husband comes he always abuse your children.

5. mwina chifukwa choti wabereka naye ana ambiri kudi anawo ntiwasamala bwanji ndekha?: May be because you gave birth to a lot of children with him, how can I take care of them alone?

6. Mwina chifukwa tiliye lamulo lotsatira - eya analipo - zamadera ena kaya boma - kaya makolo malingana ndi mtundu wa anthu ndi umene umapangitsa:

- May be because we don’t have a law to follow - yes there are some in other districts - may be parents according to the tribes of people that’s what makes a marriegew to end.

7. Ayi sungafune banja - ena amafuna chilengedwe kuti adzikhala ndi mamunayo (laughing) mwina kukhalira pamodzi: No she can’t need a husband its nature in order to be staying with the husband, may be staying [/sleeping] together (meaning sex).

8. Anowamo bwino - mtima kusiyana koma ena ayi - kufuna kwa iweyo: He feels good - different hearts but others not - its your own wish.

9. Sindinayambe ndaganiza : - I have never thought of it.

Single women: amanenedwa - amati sakukwatira kukupatsa dzina loti sakwata - ntchito umavutika monga kumanga bafa, - ngati uli ndi mwana wam’muna umamuuzu, ngati uli ndi khobili umauza wa ganyu - sungakwanitse:

- she used to be gossiped - they say that you are not getting married and they give you a name called unmarried - you find some problems like making a bathroom, if you have got a son you can tell him and if you have got money you ask someone to do it. You
cannot manage to make yourself.

A 30 Kasongo (dotta-in-law of Dora)

1. Ndinakwatiwa mu 2006, woyamba anabadwa mu Novembala chaka cha 2007, uyu anabadwa October 2008: I was married in 2006, first child was born in November 2007, this one was born in October 2008.

2. Akayimba kwathu kwa Mpoka kumowa anali ndi choimba (radio) cha Amidu anthu akamamwa mowa, tinkacheza ndithu ndiye ndipamene anandifunsira ayi nanga si amaimba, ndiye kwa 1 week ndipamene anandifunsira - anafunsira kaye chibwenzi - ndiye tinakhala pa chibwenzi chaka chimodzi kenako tinakwatinana:

- He has a radio that was used when there is beer in our village Mpoka. The radio was for Amidu, when people were drinking beer we were chatting that’s where he proposed me, he proposed me after chatting for a week, we started with chibwenzi for a year after that we got married.

Nanga sinthawi imeneyo ndinali wamng’ono sindikanatha kukhala m’banja ayi, nanga sindinkamuona momwe ankachitira pachibwenzi ndiye ndinkaona kuti kutsogolo atha kupitiliza zomwezo, zomwe ndinkafuna pamoyo wanga ankandipatsa, amachita kundipatsa yekha, koma pena nanga simunthu samalota kuti alibe chakuti, pena amandipatsa wokha pena ndimapempha ndalama pena amandigulira nsalu, nadlama nthawi yomwe ndinali ku school amandigulira makope, ball-point amadzera moyimbamo amati akayimba, ndiye akawagaila ndalama, amadzandipatsa ineyo:

- At that time I was very young, I couldn’t manage to stay in marriage, I saw him the way he was doing when we were in relationship and I knew that he will continue in future, he was providing what I wanted in my life, I was not begging money, sometimes he was buying chitenje, when I was at school he was buying some notebooks, ball-point, through the radio after singing somewhere else the owner of the radio was giving him some money then he was coming to give me.

Ali ndi zaka 24 - ee loyamba: he is 24 years old - first marriage.

Amuna ena pano ali koomba njerwa nanga mkazi angakwanitse, ife timapita kumatodzi, kumaphika, amuna amaphika koma sikwenikweni: Some men are making bricks but a woman cannot manage, we fetch some water, cooking, men can cook but not really.

Amuna amamanga nyumba pomwe akazi sam,atha - titha kuphunzira koma povuta nanga
si mamuna anampatsa nzeru kuposa mkazi: Men build houses while women cannot manage - we can learn but it is difficult because men were given more intelligent than women.

Amakhonza kupita klwa ankhoswe kuti mamuna akupanga zakutizakuti ndiye ankhoswe aja amamuzuzula mamuna kuti absinthe - amapitanso chimodzimodzi kwa ankhoswe m’bale wake wa mkaziyo kuti absinthe:

They used to go to ankhoswe to explain what a husband is doing then the ankhoswe used to tell the husband to change his behaviour - they also go to ankhoswe or the one who is related to a wife in order to change.

Amangokumana ankhoswe, anatilangiza kuti akazi asamachite mwano azimvera zomwe akunena amuna mudzikachita zomwe akufuna akaziyo: The nkhoswe met, they advised that women should not be rude but listening to what a husband is saying, even your husband do what your wife wants you to do.

Amatsogola ndi amuna, nanga si zochita za mkazi zimasiyana ndi mamuna m’banja zomwe wanena mamuna wamkazi amamvera - amamvera komano nambala 1 ndi wam’muna zimasiyana: The husband used to be in fore front because what women do is different with men, in mariege what a husband say the wife used to obey. Men obey but number 1 is a man, it is different.

Mkazi amamuuza mamuna kuti panopa ndilibe safuliya, mbale, ndilibe nsalu mamuna uja amakagula, ee amakana mwina ndalama zimakhala kuti alibe amati ndikafune kaye ndalama - akaumba njerwa, ndiye ngati kunyumba kulibe sopo amakatapitsa:

- Women used to tell the husband that; as of now I don’t have safuliya (a pot), plates, I don’t have chitenje and the husband goes to buy, sometimes they refuse may be they don’t have money they say that I must go and fetch some money - he is making bricks, then if we don’t have soap he used to go and take some money where he is making bricks.

Ayi wailesi alibe anatenga akazi awo a bambo momwe ankapita kwao. Iwowo anangobwereka: No he don’t have a radio, the wife of the owner of the radio took it when she was going to her village he was just borrowing.

Ine pena ndimapita kunyumbako kuphika mowa, pena ndimawoda mizimbe - kumudzi kwathu ndi kwa M. village - kuno ndinabwera mwezi wa disembala chaka chatha kwathuko timasowa munda olima pomwe kuno minda ndiyambiri ndiye amuna anga ananena kuti
Sometimes I go in my village to make beer, sometimes buying sugarcane for sale, my home village is M. village, I came in this village in December last year, in my village we were lacking a field to cultivate while here there are a lot of fields then my husband told me that lets go home.

Iwowo - chifukwa Iwowo ndi amene amapeza ndalama, komanso ndi amene amadziwa mavuto a m’banja: My husband - because he is the one who finds money and he is the one who knows some of the problems in our family.

Mwina amangofuna kuti adzikhala ndi dzina lokha kuti awo ndi akazi a ujeni - amafuna ulemu - komanso amunawo ngati akugwira ntchito adziwapatsa ndalama: May be they just want to have the name that they are the wife of someone - they want to be respected - and if the husband is working they should be able to give them money.

If some women are doing prostitution most of the men get bored and they say its good to leave them yes it happens they are not satisfied with what their husband are doing.

Yes, its because of other problems, and they say that at least they must have a husband who can help her - if you don’t have a house, and you don’t have an eldest son who can build it for you and you say that its good for me to get married so that he can build a house for me even bathroom, toilet, kitchen, they can do it on their own but they say that with my money I can use it in other things and its good for me toget married because a man will be able to do it freely.

They leave her and get married to another woman who can bear children, there is
nothing else that he can, and they say that no problem because she is cooking for me.

Amakawauza abale ake kuti mamunayo azitakataka kuti mkaziyo amulandire watopa: They tell his relatives to tell him to find something to do in order to take care of the family because the wife is tired.

10. Nanga si maiko akunja ndi kuno ndi wosiyana, ife timalima basi mwina amagwira ntchito kuti apeze ndalama - ayi sakuthandiza chifukwa ena amangoolemba maina basi kumapita:

- Because our country is different from other countries, we do farming only, may others find job inorder to get money, no! they are not helping because others they just come and write down our names and go.

A 31

2. Azibambo amavala trouser ife nsalu mwamuna amalowa ntchire kukadula mitengo, nyumba kupachikira mwina kumanga nyumba, mzimayi zakukitcheni pamtondo, ngati mukukhala bwinobwino ndiye kuti palibe chovuta:

- Men put on trouses and we put on chitenje. A man goes in the bush to cut down trees, making a roof may be building houses, a woman thinks of cooking and pounding, if you are staying properly that means there is no problem.

3. Azibambo amalimbikira kukafuna ganyu yolima ena kupanga geni ndi kumapeza ndalama - mzimayi atha kupanga. Komanso pali ndi azimayi ake. Ena azimayi olo apeze ndalama sangakwanitse kupanga geni mwina azibambo amatenga zochulukirapo kuposa amayi, chifukwa abambo amakhala ndi ndalama zambiri zoti zomwe akufuna kuwoda zimakwanira ndi ndalama zomwe ali nazo pomwe mzimayi sangakwanitse:

- Men work hard to find ganyu, especially farming, others doing BS and find their own money. A woman can do BS but they are some women who can manage BS. But other women although they find money they cannot manage to do BS, may be some men take a lot of money than women because men have a lot of money that they can go and buy what they want to sell, it is enough money that they can buy what they want while women cannot manage.

Azibambo amalima ndiye akalima amapeza ndalama zambiri ndikuyambira bizinesi. Azibambo ena woti alime nawo mwina amakupatsa zochepe iwowo amatenga zambiri (laughing) amapanga zimenezo kuti akhale ndi ndalama zambiri kuposa azimayi akakhala
kuti abambo akhala nawiwhi yayitali - amangoti kaya bola ndabereka nawiwhi ndikhale
nawiwhi olawiwhe mavuto amati ngati nditani mabanja ake amasiku ano amangoti choncho
bola adziti che uje ali pa banja:

- Other men do farming, after farming they find money and start business, other men if
you can grow crops with them they give you less money, and he takes a lot of money.
They do that inorder for them to have a lot of money more than women, but if a woman
stayed with that husband for along period of time and he comes from somewhere but
very far they say that antway because I gave birth to a lot of children with him and I
will still stay with him although she can face a lot of problems she says that what can I
do according to the families of today, they just accept inorder for some people to say
that she is married.

Nanga si kunalembedwa kuti munthu aliyense azikhala awiriawiri mznaiyena samainai
kogulitsa koma kogulitsa kuja amaima ndi azibambo sikawirikawiri kukhala pomwe
akulandira ndalama monga ngati ulimi wathonde amalima ndi azibambo akagulitsa
ndikulandira ndalama, ndiye pali azibambo ena woti akiphika kunyumba amatenga ndalama
ija ndikuwapatsa amayi yochepa koma zambiri ndikutenga abambo. Ndiye amayi amati
ndiwone receipt ndiye amakanzibiza iworwo amawona kuti ndi mazibambo ndikamayenda
ndikhale ndikenakake [tiny crossroads market], pena mwina koyendako nanga si
mazibambo, mwina amapeza kamseli ndiye amatenga kamene kaja ndikutereka:

- Because it was written that (bible) everybody should have a life partner when they are
selling cotton, most of the men go to receive the money but women not really to be at
the place where they receive money. For example after selling cotton they are some
talents when they reach home they give less money to their wives and themselves they
take a lot of money, when the wife ask for a receipt they don’t show her. They saw that
they are men, and when moving around I should have something in my pocket may be
when they are moving around because they are men they find a girlfriend somewhere
and they keep that money to give her.

4. Azimayi ambiri amapita kwa ankhoswe kuti basi mukamutenge wanu zomwe akuchita
ndatopa nazo koma ambiri ayi amati ndidzikhala nawiwhi olawiwhe mavuto:

- Most of women they go to ankhoswe to tell them to take his relative, ‘am tired with
what he is doing’ but most of the women they don’t do this, they say that I will stay
with him although they face some problems.

Kaya azimayiwo chimawachititsa ndi chain kaya. Amangokhalabe choncho mwina mkazi
ujia amalepherera kumuthangatisa koma mamuna uja samapita kwawo ena amafuna
mitengo kuti mamuna akhazikike ndiye olawiwhe awathamangitsa amakana. Zimatheka koma
- I don’t know what makes these women to accept this, they just stay like that, may be a woman has tried to chase him but failed he is not going back to his village others they find traditional medicine to make him stay, so if they can chase him he cannot go it is possible to chase him but others fail.

Ena amakhala mwamuna uja osamuphikira madzi, kapena kumangokhala osalankhulitsana kuti mwina zikamupweteka achoke koma samachoka (laughed) ayi sizimatheka nsima timamupatsa olo mukangane mumayenera kuphika ndikumupatsa koma adzikana yekha:

- Others stay without boiling some water for him or else they just stay without talking to each other thinking that when he will feel pain he will go back to his village but they don’t go. No! it is not possible we give him some nsima, although you have quarrelled but you must cook and give him and he must refuse himself.

Sibwino kudya wekha koma (laughing) basi uphike umupatse kaya adya kaya sadya zake zimenezo bola iwe wamupatsa, ee amawopa kuti amunena kuti mpaka kumukaniza nsima, oasmaphikira bwanji, ee akhoza kumakunena kuti pamenepe mukulakwa mpaka osamupatsa nsima, ayi sikoletsedwa kumenya mkazi ee ndichoipa kwambiri umaganiza kuti ndikapanda kumupatsa nsima afà, akhoza kuphika koma ngati wamuuza kuti mnyumba ufa asatenge ndiyi aphi kwa bwanji?:

- It is not good to eat alone, but cook and give him, either he will eat or not its up to him. Its good that you give him food - yes she always being afraid that her friends will say that you are not giving him nsima “why can’t you cook for him”, yes! They can say that you are not doing good, up to the stage of not giving him nsima? No! it is not allowed to beat a wife yes its bad! We think that if I will not give him nsima, he will die, he can cook but if you told him not to take maize flour in your house, how can he cook?

5. Basi kusagwirizana ndiye kuno mabanja amangotha mwezi uno wina wamawa wina kungokhala itatu basi, mwina mkazi ndziwolimbikira mwamuna osalimbikira ndiyie pamavuta mkazi yekha kuti azilimbikira pomwe mamuna ndi ofooka, umaganiza kuti bola ndimupilikitse ndidzikhala ndekha kuti zomwe ndikupangazo ndizipanga mwa ine ndekha:

- Because of some discouragements and most of the families here end very shortly may be they can stay only a month or 2-3 months, may be she is a hard working woman while a husband not, then its difficult for a woman to work hard alone while a husband is weak, you always think of chasing him and stay alone, so that what I want to do I
should be doing on my own.

6. Ayi akhoza kumupilikitsa chifukwa monga ngati ineyo ndilibe mamuna ndikukhala ndekha, kumazisamala ndekha ndiye abwere mamuna ndiye zomwe ndimapangazo ndili ndekha, ndi mamunayo sakupanga zimenezo ndi bwino mnyumbamo kungomuthamangitsa basi mnyumbamo bola akundipatsa boyi olo asandithandize kusamala ana:

- No she can chase him, because for example I am staying alone and I don’t have a husband, taking care of myself, then if a husband can come and she is not doing what I was doing when I was alone (not taking care of the family) its good just to chase him, others say at least he is giving me sex although he is not taking care of children.

Single; Mavuto omwe timakumana nawo monga kunkhani ya ndalama imavuta kuipeza, nyumba ngati ulibe ndalama limakhala vuto, komano amene ali ndi abambo woti ndi wolimbikira akhoza kuyang’ana kuti nyumbayi pamenepe yatani ndikukonza, kodi pakhomo pano chasowa ndi chani kugula - utapeza ndalama utha kumuza kuti undipangire olo uduzumauza waganyu, njala, kusamala ana ndikovuta, nanga si amuna akusowa banja loyamba ngati linatha ndiye chitheleni ena osabwera kudzakufunsira ndiye umangokhala:

- The problems that we face are that; it is difficult to find money, if you don’t have money in your house, it’s a big problem, but those who have got husband who works hard he can be able to see that the the house needs to be maintained, and he can see what is needed in the family and buy - if you find money you can hire someone to build it, even grasses for the roof, hunger season buying food, taking care of children, it is difficult due to lack of men, imagine if you divorced and no-one comes to propose you, then you just stay.

Ayi samafuna! Mukuganiza kuti munthu angafune kuti azikhala yekha? Atapezeka wokhulupilika utha kukhala naye. Koma utamuona kuti uyu ayi basi utha kumakhala wekha:

- No! it is not their wish! Do you think that someone can decide to stay alone without getting married? If you can find a faithfull husband you can stay with him. But if you can’t like him! You can stay alone.

7. Basi mamuna amangokhala - kenako mkazi amakhala ngati mamuna chifukwa ndi amene akupenza ndalama. Ayi chimene wanena mkazi samamvera koma amangokhala. Basi mkaziyo amayetsetsa kuti achoke koma mamuna samackoka:
The husband just stay - then a wife stays like a husband in the family because she is the one who find money, no he doesn’t accept what the wife is saying but he just stay. A wife can try her best to chase the husband but they don’t go and they just stay.

Malawians are poor as you have seen may be because we give birth to a lot of children that’s why we are poor and also due to lack of money, inorder to find money it is just through farming, but even you grow a lot of crops according to this year, there are still problems.

Basi anthu akumalera, ndipo zinthu zikusintha - anthu amasangalala akamatenga kulera chifukwa m’malo mokhala ndi ana 5 amatha kukhala ndi atatu:

People are doing family planning and things are changing now, people are happy when they are doing family planning, because instead of giving birth to 5 children,. They they are able to have 3.

Its true they are not helping - no I don’t know - may be it can be possible if we can talk to them but where can we find them.

The only way is through ganyu, and a contract, others get employed, when they are tired they change the job, either at Balaka, when women came back from fetching water, or from the field men just stay and rest while you are busy cooking relish for the husband to eat.

Azimayi nanga si amalimbikira mageni, malingana kuti akalimbikira geni yomwe
akupanga azibambo. Amayi amalimbikira geni nanga si ndi ntchito yoti amakhala 1-30
tsiku lililonse ku geni, kaya mbatata, kaya mandasi (husbands idea) = azibambo amapeza
ndalama makamaka kuiti aa magwilidwe antchito, komanso azimayi ndi amene ali
patsogolo chifikwa akulimbikira BS, amatha kupikula chimanga, kukhala ku msika ndiye
samatopa ee amaposa azimuna chifikwa ife azibambo amene ali ndi geni yopikula zovala
kulowa mtawuni atha kumapeza bwino (child crying):

- Women work hard in BS when they work hard in BS they find their needs. Women
work hard in business because they stay from first day of the month up to the last day of
the month 1-30 doing BS, either mandasi or potatoes, (husband idea) = men find money
according aaa! To their jobs, but women are at the forefront because they are working hard
in BS, they buy maize for sale, staying at the market eee! And they don’t get tired, it is
different with men because men just buy second hand clothes and sell and they can go to
town and get rich.

4. Ngati sakutsangalatsidwa ndi mamuna wake banja limatha - mamuna amakuthawa
ndiye umati zikomo kwambiri pitani bamboo:

- If she is not happy with her husband they end marriage - but men run away from you
and you say that “thanks a lot my husband, have a nice journey”.

5. Kupilira (laughing) nanga si ukapilira umaona kuti mamuna wasintha khalidwe ndiye
umati mwina ndikhala naye:

- We just accept because at the end you see that the husband has changed his behaviour
and you say that maybe I will stay with him for a long period of time.

6. Masiku ano mabanja asiyana ndi kalekale mumazolowerana, koma masiku ano azimayi
mwachuluka kupanga mwa mseri zambiri:

- Marriages of today are different from the past, in the past we were getting used to
someone’s behaviour, but women of nowadays they have extra husbands.

Why- nanga si zakale zinali zakale pano atsikana amangoti uku kulowera uklu kulowera :
because in the past were about the past nowadays girls are just moving around with
different men.

Atsikana makolo akati mizikhazikika nanga si amatsata kuti ndalama zambiri zili
moyenda: They don’t listen because they say that if I will stay I will not have money but
left me move around and find money.

8. Pali zifukwa zina zoti mzimayi utha kufotokoza, nanga nyumba ndimanga bwanji, ngati ukukwanitsa zones umasowa chimodzi kuti ichi sindikwanitsa (laughing):

- There are other reasons that a woman can manage to explain, for example how can I build a house, if you are able to manage everything there is one thing that you cannot manage on your own.

9. Amadandaula, kuti chilichonse akuchita yekha, basi ena amati tisiyane, nanga azingokhala, akamuufa chinthu osachita - makamaka mzimayi chifukwa ndi amene akuchita zonse (in general = ndi amuna) amunawo zimawanyasa, iwe ukalankhula kuti abale tiyeni tizipanga izi, mwamuna uja ngati sakufuna amapita:

- She complains that; she is doing anything alone, others say that lets separate just staying! If you ask him to do something he is not doing - especially women because she is the one who is providing everything (in general, its men) most of the men get bored, if you tell him that lets do this and if he don’t want to do it he moves back to his village.

10. Ndalama kusowa (husband = kuchepa ma company: Lack of money, lack of companies. Ma farm kutali ana ndiosauka, kwathu kuno mavuto ndi ambiri: No farms to get employed, children are poor, in our village there are a lot of problems.

Amathandiza koma ambiri angongole abwera pompano momwe inu mwabwera, kale ukalephera kubweza ngongole amabwera kudzatenga ziweto ndi zina zomwe uli nazo (abambo andithandize) husband; kungoti dziko lathuli zintchito sizikupezeka, kuti tilowenso mtauni kuti mwina koma sitimapeza - dziko la Malawi ndi labwino koma vuto ndi ndalama kluchepa (laughed):

- They help, but a lot of them are those who gave loan and they came while you are here, in the past if you have failed to pay back loan they were coming to take all your livestock and everything that you have (husband can you help me) husband; Here in our country it is difficult to find job, even when we go to tow we fail to find job, our country Malawi is nice but the problem is due to lack of money.

A 33 (nothing) A34 15 seconds nothing A 35 3 seconds nothing.
B 1 old woman (already discussed)

2. umakhala otele kusamala ana.

C 1 Eveles

2. Masiku agano amta kwana achalume nambo achakongwe apano ngasimana msikana wagamba kutama pa m’lango basi yakatayakata, kwenda jenda, kala kwaliji kwangali yeleye ee mwanache jwamkongwe ngatama pa m’lango? Nthawi jimasilam amwali ngayikumanyika yakutenda, awanache wamagano wgangapikana kala watusaliraga chati chati m’tendeje wee tapikanaga, kogopa nambo lero jino pangali kogopa kuti umsalire mwanache ya watendaya wandu kala iyai ngakukomboleka, nanga ndawi jikwanire kwali ngangumanyilira achalume basi yakatayakata:

- Now adays although they are a lot of men you cannot find a young girl who is just staying at home but moving around with different men in the past we didn’t do this. A young girl not staying at home? Time its over now, children of nowadays, I don’t know what they are doing they don’t listen to elders, in the past we were told that; don’t do this and we were listening because we were afraid and nowadays they are not afraid at all. If we tell them about the past they don’t listen, may be time its over, I don’t know! Men are just moving around with women while women are just moving around with men.

3. Wane wana ngamisyo gakupanganya masengo nambo wane akupata ligongo lyawiyi, kwajiwira achim’jawo, nambo wajinji masengo wane kulima litonje imanga yosope yana mbiya nambo chisiru chalembedwe kuti achi chichiwa chisiru ndi chisiru akuleka sukulu ulendo kutenda selo, naga ngakupikana yachakulungwa, we watusaliraga kuti kwana chiwila, nambo achalume wata lo [nearest tradingcenter] ga kala, kulekangana kwake kuwa basi, nambo apano iyai kwaleka achalume mnyumba bona kukoposya chipepalacho basi akundile. ana ulombera wachipepala? Magano wandu achalume akusosa kubala, kalakala achinangolo watusaliraga. Sukulu ngakumalisa yambo agamba kuyigala chitumbo:

- Others have got their own ways of finding money while others are just thieves, they steal from their friends, but a lot of cotton and maize after selling they find a lot of money but others are still foolish, they stop going to school and start prostitution, they are not listening from their elders, my parents were telling me that there is a disease in the past we were getting married till death with the same husband but now they leave their husband! In the house going to some one who has a lot of money and it is not difficult to accept marriage nowadays they just want money not marriage, as of now men are going to find a wife at a bar and girls are just getting pregnant.
Nguti wane masengo, wane wiwi achakongwe wamalisise sukuulu nikuwa papa sengo akupata likobili. We kala twatwaga, kulimbangana walume nikutamaga pa m’longo, naga apite kumasengo am’simaneje pa m’lango apano wakongwe kumasengo soni walume kumasengo nambo kala kutwa basi ni kulisa kuti alye walume ugali apano basi kumchini:

- Am saying that others are working whole others are thieves, some women finished their school and now are working and find their own money. In the past we were just pounding maize while a man was just staying at home, when he has gone to work somewhere else we were not moving around just waiting for him to come back, nowadays men are working even women in the past just pounding and farming for the husband to eat.

Basi kwapika likobili 100mk basi soni kwapika chilwele. Kwikatu apano nikuti naligosile, makolo gatusaliraga:

- They sleep with them and give them 100mk only and a disease. Am old now because my parents were telling me not to like men [Eveles].

Wajinji soni wane mpakana akusuma ng’ombe, wajaliwe nambo nbiya syakwe kulima basi. Wane kupata makebiri basi kulimisya m’fungu jikape ngakombola, wane wana achimjawo akwapaya mbiya wane wanache akwamisya mbiya ni kwapika waganyu, mpera Alma:

- A lot of them are now buying cow, they are lucky, but it is just through farming, others find money and ask someone to work on their fields (hire ganyu), you cannot manage alone, others have got children who are working somewhere and they send some money for their parents like Alma.

4. Basi kwatopola kuti ajaje - kwaleka ni kusosa wane: you just chase him to go - men they go to find another wife.

5. Usiru - foolish.

Wane akugona pachiguduli nambo wanache nikuwerekaga, nguwo wangali! Nambo ulo [nearest tradingcenter] wakalakala, wane akugona pasi eti ni usiru, wele, mnungu akusalumbikanya chisiru kulombera soni chisiru wanache ndu!:

- Others are sleeping on a sack not mat but they are just giving birth to a lot of children they don’t have chitenje, but they married some years ago still sleeping on the floor
God makes a foolish man to marry a foolish woman.

M’mene analengera mulungu mulungu ali ndi mbali yake uku mtundu wina kwinanso mtundu wina, bwanji tonse sanatipatse kuyera, kwawo kuli akuda ayi azungu basi ena alomwe ena ayao - anyanja:

- It is just like the way how God created, god has got his own side, we are of different tribes why we are white people? In your country so you have black people? No! you are just white people others are Yao here, and Nyanja.

6. Ngapikangana basi - akuno magano wajinji basi kumwa ukana - sambano wakongwe akusakana. Pachatande kusumisya litonji ngagona mnyumba, ngapikakanila wamkwawo mpera nghanalima impepe. Pacha male mbiya syalitonjipo basi - nambo wane akusuma malata - chisiri wakongwewo, kumangwawo yaya kwangali isiru - akuno akukuya mbiya basi 100mk 1mk basi kupocheramo sukulu alesile - kwaula kusukulu basi kalasi 1-2 kuti amalisye iyayi basi chitumbo: - Because of some disagreements nowadays a lot of men are just drinking beer and women don’t like this when they will start selling cotton they will not sleep in the house, they don’t listen to their wife as if they didn’t work together in the field. After eating their money they go back to their wives, but others are buying iron sheets, they are just foolish, don’t you have foolish people in your country? They stop school from class 1-2 only they just get pregnant after receiving only 100mk.

7. Iyayi! Ukwati watochele kwa mmlungu une ngusile ngangusosa walume jwangali machili: No! marriage came from God, am old now and I don’t want a husband because I am very weak now.

8. Mbiya kupata wakongwe basi gambaga kwereka wanache - wakongwe kwala kumasengo - walume kukamulaga gapa m’lango, ngokwe, kulima - chimbudzi: - Men are happy when they are just staying, women just giving birth to children women going to work something while a man is doing house hold chores working in the field - a toilet.

9. Initiation

Kuperekaga ulemu, kwaona achakulingwa kwapochera naga ajigele indu - achakulingwa kwajogopaga. Kala kwera pa njinga kwaona achakulingwa twatulukaga kuti wakulingwa apite. Kwaona achakulingwa kutindiwalaga, ngajima ajenu yindu, naga ayiche achalendo
- You must respect elders, if you see some elder people passing by with something on their heads you must carry for them. In the past when we were on the bicycle we were stopping to allow elder people to pass by. You must kneel down when you see the elder ones, you must share food with your friends, if you have got a visitor you must cook for them even if you have got a chichen give them to eat.

- Don’t be rude, if you see elder ones help them to carry what they have carried, you will see them giving you some bananas to show thanks, nowadays children are not listening.

- You must respect your husband and listen to everything that he is telling you when a husband has gone somewhere else, just stay at home and wait for him to come back, boiling water for him, if he has carried something you must carry for him, even a bicycle help him to carry, put some water at the bathroom for him, in the past we were listening and men were not getting worried, when he is back home, ask him how was the day then gave him some water or tea and at 12 give him nsima, respect your mother-in-law don’t be selfish, give them food to eat.

- Nayenso mamuna amuuzu kuti ukafika pa ukwati osachita nkhanza mukayambana kakhululukirana. Kumachita ulemu: Even the husband is told not to mistreat his wife, if you have quarrelled you must forgive each other, you must respect her.
akadwala amaona ndi abambo, kunchini timafuna abambo, azimayi ena geni ife sitimapanga kusowa:

3392 - A man is able to make a maize storage, a toilet, a bathroom and we cannot manage plates, and if a child is ill a man is able to take care even at the kitchen we need a husband, other women they do BS and we don’t do because we don’t have capital.

3393 Mpamba umasowa azimayi - it is difficult for a woman to find capital.

3394 3. Azibambo amapanga ganyu, kulima thonje kumagulitsa, ee koma ena sitimakwanitsa, funsani ndikuyankhani, ena amayendayenda kumsika, ena kusiya ndalama ku Bank, ena mphwayi/ulesi sindikwanitsa kuyankha:

3395 - Men go for casual labour, growing cotton and sell, ee but others we can not manage, ask and I will answer you others move around at the market others keep their money at the Bank, others just lazy, I will not manage to answer.

3396 4. Kuthetsa zimenezi ndizosavuta kuyankha chimodzimodzi kusiyana: we just end marriage, this is not difficult to answer its just the same, they divorce.

3397 5. Amazolowerana - they get used to each other.

3398 6. Pali azibambo ena amafunsira banja ali ndi mkazi wawo, ndiye akazi aja akamva amabwera kudzapanga voko ndiye iwe ngati sukufuna umati basi bamboo dzipitani. Basi iyeyo apite kwa mamunayo - kupusa - ena samawauza ana awo - mkazi wake asamubweretse - kumuza kuti zimenezo ayi ine sindinapangeko ndili wang’ono:

3399 - There are some other men who propose while they have got another wife and when that woman knows they come to quarrel and if you don’t want you just tell the husband, foolish - others they don’t tell their children - he must not bring his wife at home - you can tell the child that don’t do it because I have never done it when I was young.

3400 7. Ayi sangafune, maganizo kusiyana: No! they can’t need a husband we think differently.

3401 8. (laughing) munthu umati ukayenda umamuona mnzako m’mene wavalira ndiye umaganiza kuti ndikanakhala ndi mamuna bwenzi akundigulira: (laughed) when you have gone somewhere else, you see how your friend has dressed and you think that if I had a husband he could have bought for me.
They used to agree that; I will be doing this and you must do this- No you can't say say that you are the one who is taking care of the family, you can say that the husband is the one who is taking care of the family so that people should not see his foolishness.

C 3 Livia

Women go to fetch water while men make a roof, men don’t cook nsima but women cook nsima, men doesn’t go to the maize mill but others go. According to the behaviour it is the same but others are different (help me to answer).

3. Men are intelligent that we cannot think - other businesses women cannot manage - do you think that a woman can manage to drive a car or catching fish?

Chifukwa choti makoka ake sitingakwanitse kukoka chifukwa cha mphamvu: because the nets are heavy and we cannot manage because we are weak.

4. If it is marriage they go to ankhoswe, after discussions when we see that it is possible they stay together if they have failed to discuss they end the marriage or they send him back to his village. they also discuss but it doesn’t take long like a wife, because the wife says that lets discuss so that we should not divorce but a man says that I will find another wife (laughed) others think while others not.
5. Banja lija ndiloti wina anachita kuwafunsira ndiye samadziwa kuti mamuna ndiwotani, umangowona akuchita nkhanza basi kupilira, kuti mwina asintha:

- May be there is someone who found a husband for her or a wife for him and they don’t know his or her behaviour they just see that he is abusing her they just accept, thinking that he will change.

6. Pali ena amakondana akakhala ndi ndalama, pomwe ena samakondwera mamuna akakhala ndi ndalama amati akupanga uhule - chifukwa chakusamvetsetsana:

- They are others who love each other when they have got money while others are just happy when the wife has got money they say that she is doing prostitution because of some disagreements.

7. Pena pamaperewera (laughed) mwina amafuna chikondi (laughed) tikanakhala kuseri: They lack something, may be they want love (lets seat behind the house she was not free to talk).

8. Abambo ena amati mkazi wanga sindimafuna kuti uzipanga geni ndiye umasiya koma umafuna - ee anthu ena zimawatsangalatsa chifukwa mwina mamuna amapeza ndalama movutika mwina ganyu - mkazi kuoda tomato:

- Other men say that I don’t want my wife to do BS then you stop while you want because may be the husband find money sometimes through ganyu while the wife is buying tomatoes for sale.

C 4 Jasmine

2. Mzibambo amalimbikira pomwe azimayi ayi, mzibambo amafunsira ukwati mzymayi samafunsira, achalume kutawa nyumba kuwala talauza achalume ilundu:

- A man works hard while a woman not, a man is able to propose while a woman not, men are able to build houses, put on trousers while we put on zitenje.

3. Nanga si kusowa ntchito, azibambo amakafuna contract ganyu kumalima, azimayi koma kupanga geni: Due to lack of job, men go to find a contract of working in the field while women do BS.
4. Basi ukwati watha mamuna amasamuka: They end marriage husband goes back to his village.

5. Chifukwa abambo ena amasamala mkazi - kupilira: Because other men are able to take care of the wife, they just accept.

6. Samagwirizana - chinyengo amuna kuputsitsa mkazi - amanama - kuti ndikukwatira: Because of some disagreements, most of the men used to cheat the wife that I will marry you.

Kutha masiku pang’ono banja latha - kuchuluka akazi amuna achepa - ayi kale kunalibe - (sinditha kuyankha): After few days they end marriage, they are a lot of women now than men - no in the past not - (I will not manage to answer).

7. Mamuna kusatha kusamala mkazi - kusowa ntchito - mamuna amadandaula basi mwina ndakhala nawo kuyambira kale - koma akakhala wanyuwani umamuthamangitsa - mwina kalelo amagwira ntchito:

- Other men they don’t know how to take care of the wife due to lack of job- a man used to get worried - but because I stayed with him for long period of time, but if he is a new husband we chase him, may be in the past he was working.

Ee kuposa kale pano bola, kale amuna amafunsira ukwati kugula nsalu imodzi yomweyo ngati bulangete mwana pomwepo, koma tsopano ena akupanga geni ena kuchitukula ulimi - ulimi ukutukula anthu chifukwa akulima kugulitsa - kale akalima osagulitsa kudya basi:

- Yes more than in the past, as of now at least in the past men were proposing for marriage, buying 1 chitenje, using the same chitenje as a blanket with a child, but as of now others are doing BS others are working, farming, through farming people are improving their lives because they farm and sale while in the past we were growing crops for food.

C 5 Chief Mudzi B

2. Abambo ena ali ndi khalidwe ena ayi, abambo amatisamala, kukakhala njala kusamala ana, azimayi kusamala ana, abambo ena nkhanza kwa amayi ena nkhanza kwa Pamela:

- Other men have got good behaviour, while others not, men take care of us and children, even in hunger season, other men they mistreat their wives while others mistreat their
children.

3. Azibambo ena ganyu kumapita mtauni ena business kulima tomato kumawodetsa mtawuni ena makontilatiti. Azimayi ena kulima kulima tomato mdimba kukagulitsa ku Balaka, mphamvu kwambiri mzibambo, mzimayi pena kutanganidwa ndi ana:

- Other men do ganyu, others going to town, others BS, others growing tomatoes and sell in town others grow tomatoes in swampy, others contract, other women grow tomatoes and sell at Balaka, men are strong while women busy taking care of children.

4. Basi kumuthamangitsa mamuna kukhala yekha - basi amakakwatira kwina: You can just chase him and stay alone - he goes to get married to another wife.

5. Mwina kuti akhale naye chifukwa anthu amati ukakhala pa banja umalemekezeka - pena amati ndisintha - akatopa basi amasiyana: In order to stay with him so that people should say that you are married and they respect you, sometimes he says I will change when they are tired they divorce.

6. Kale amagwirizana koma anyamata amasiku ano sindimadziwa kuti kaya amaganiza chani amati akakwatira apa kukakwiranso kwina ndiye mzimayi amakana amati tikakhala awiri ndiye kuti nsalu upeza? Zimakhala zogawana ndiye akazi amati ine ayi panopa zawonjeza - m’modzi atatu:

- In the past there was an agreement but boys of nowadays I don’t know what they think, they get married everywhere, and a woman used to refuse and say that if we are 2 wives can you find chitenje? They used to share, and a woman says that its too much - 1 man 3 wives.

7. Mwina nyumba ulibe, kulima wekha kumakuvuta, kuvala kuvutura, ena zolima mdimba samadziwa, ndichifukwa chake timapeza amuna kuti atithandize. Zimachitika ngati mkaziyo ali ndi ndalama amawauza a ganyu, mwina chilakolako oti ndi chilengedwe:

- May be you don’t have a house, working alone in the field, having problems, difficult to find clothes, others don’t know how to cultivate in swampy that’s why we find a husband and get married, it happens if the woman has got money she can ask someone for ganyu, may be desire because its nature.

8. Sanachuluke - amafunika kuti mamuna azisamala banja - ayi sizimamutsangatsa nanga si akungokhala mkazi ndi amene amafuna chakudya - mitima ndiyosiyana mwina akazi ena
amafuna azisamala amuna awo bola adzigona mnyumba kumuthetsa chilakolako.

- Not many - a man should be able to take care of the family - no he is not happy, because he is just staying and the wife is the one who finds food - they have different hearts may be other women wants to take care of their husband to sleep in the house and end her desire.

B 1 & 2 Old Woman already discussed

B 3 Alida

2. Kumadzi, nhuni, kumphika, kusinja azimayi ndiye timasiyanitsa: Water, firewood, cooking, pounding but women we make a different.

3. Azibambo ena amagwila tikiti pa mwezi kumalandira, kulima mzmimayi, kulima kokha azimayi ena amagwira nchito koma ena timangokhala, chaka chino kudandaula timalima chimodzimodzi - mphamvu zimasiyana:

- Other men are working and receive money at the end of the month, women farming, other women are working while others are just staying, this year things are not working, we are of different power.

4. Mamuna amapereka lamulo - amasiyana amasiyananso - ngati mwayambana mumapita kwa ankhoswe, ena amamvera ena ayi, akayambiranso umatopa. Amene amamva kuwawa amathetsa kaya mkazi kaya mamuna - kunoko ena akumenya mkazi - azimayi ena mahule amasiya mamuna kumapita kutchire amuna amakwiya:

- A husband gives a law - they divorce, if we have quarrelled, we go to ankhoswe to complain, if he is still doing the same behaviour we used to be tired and the one who is feeling painfull end the marriage either a woman or a man, here other men beat their wives, other women are prostitutes they leave their husband going to the bush to have sex and most of the men gets angry.

5. Amafuna mtendere - ee kugwirizana ena amakwatirana, mnyamata ndi mtsikana - kubereka Pamela mpaka zidzukulu:

- They want peace - yes because of agreement, others get married when they are still young - and give birth to children and grandchildren.
6. Zochita kuchuluka, monga ulimi munthu amalima thonje akalima akagulitsa banja kutha kenako kukwatira wina mkazi ndiye banja limatha:

- A lot of things to do, for example farming, they grow cotton after growing cotton they sell, after divorcing they get married to another wife.

7. Ukwati ndiwofunika - kuthandizana, ndanena kuti mbali yolima, ana kuwasamala azidya mokwanira mkazi azivala - ana apachibwenzi amavutika koma akakwatira sopo sasowa ukadwala mamuna amakuthandiza kupita ku chipatala, kuphika phala ambiri amazikonda:

- Marriage is very important - we help other other, I have already said that in farming taking care of children, eat enough food, buying clothes for the wife, when you have got children from a boyfriend it is difficult to take care but you are married you don’t lack soap, when you are ill a husband sent you to the hospital, making porridge, most of men likes to do it.

8. Panopa anthu akupeza bwino kale kunali mavuto - tinalibe zinthu zambiri, kulima anthu amalima, kugulitsa samagulitsa koma kudyasa basi ndiye anthu anali ndi chakudya koma ndalama ayi, ndiye ndalama ndizofunika. Chaka chino anthu tivutika kukhala kuba kwambiri chifukwa kuli be ndalama. Pano bola tikulima, tikupeza ndalama ndi kugula zomwe tikufuna:

- As of now people are getting better than the past, we didn’t have a lot of things we were farming, but they were not selling their crops but only eating and a lot of people had a lot of food but money not but money is very important, this year we will have a lot of problems and a lot of people will be stealing because there is no money. At least we are now growing crops and find money to buy what we want.

9. Chifukwa choperewera mphamvu, kupeza ndalama pachaka koma mtawuni akupeza pa mwezi, ena akupanga geni - tikanagulitsa mbewu bwenzi pano ndalama zitatha, m’munda kulima tokha, njala kusowa ndalama yogulira chakudya:

- We are very weak, we find money once a year but in town they find money every month, others are doing BS, we sold our crops we could finished our money, working alone in the field, hunger due to lack of money to buy food.

Ena amapita kukapanga geni koma ena ndi wosaphunzira - sukulu pano bola kopma kale tinalibe ndalama zolipilira - pano ena akulephera kuphunzira chifukwa chovutika - zovala -
- Others go to town to do BS but others are not educated, at least nowadays people are going to school in the past we didn’t have money to pay- nowadays people are failing to go to school because of poverty, they don’t have clothes and parents.

Musitafa B 4

2. Ife timatunga madzi abambo ayi, ife timaphika koma azibambo ena samaphika. Akazi sitivala zachimuna. Charity: (amuna nkhoswe ife sitingathe) azimayi kutchola njkhwani kumunda abambo ayi:

- We fetch some water while men not, we cook but other men they don’t, women don’t put clothes for men. Charity: men are able to make a maize storage and we cannot manage. Women fetching pumpkin leaves in the field while men not.

3. Ndalama timapangira limodzi koma udindo abambo ndi omwe ali ndi udindo amaziteteza ngati ndi mutu wabanja chifukwa amagula zones pakhomo:

- We find money together but women don’t have power or responsibility, but men have got responsibility they think that they are the heads of the family because they buy everything that is needed at home.

4. Timakawauza akwao. Charity: nthawi ya ulimi aliyense amapanga zake chifukwa ndalama akazi samaziona ndiye amasiyana) mamuna amakauza akwao kwa mkazi ndiye amakumana ndikutambirana kuti abambo absinthe ngati sizikutheka banja limatha:

We tell his parents. Charity: when farming everybody grow his/her own crops because women don’t see how much the husband sold and they divorce, a man goes to tell the relatives of the woman and they meet to discuss inorder to make the husband change, if it is not possible they end marriage.

5. Amuna amakana kuchoka, ena amamwa tameki, ena amachoka kumusiya mamuna Charity (ena kuthawa) Doris ena amapilira ngati banja akulifuna (all laughed):

- Most of the men refuse to go, others drink poison, others leave the husband alone, Charity: others they run away, Doris: others they just accept if they want marriage (all laughed)
6. Ambiri kuno ndi akumwa mowa ndiye khalidwe limenelo ndiloipa - Doris - ena kusagwilizana mayankhulidwe. Charity: mwina samagona pakhomo basi kupita ku bar 1 week akakhala ndi ndalama - ndiye mkazi amatopa:

- A lot of men here drink beer, that is bad behaviour, Doris: others because of some disagreement in talking. Charity: may be he don’t spent a night at home going to the bar for a week when they have got money. Then the wife gets tired.


- Its nature (Doris laughed) because of problems, who can make a roof for you. Charity: if you give birth to children it is difficult to take care of children. If you hire someone for ganyu he don’t do it properly, they just want money then every year building a house that’s why they want a husband to do it for her. Charity: others they just want children others because of nature they don’t like to get married often because they are afraid of a disease.

Doris: ena samalemekezeka, uyu kukufunsira kuvomera - ndiye amawuzana kuti tapita akalola ine ndagona naye chifukwa ulibe mamuna, koma ukakhala ndi mamuna samabwera amadziwa kuti uli wekha. Florence: akagogoda umakuwa kuti wakuba ngati simunagwirizane:

- Doris: others they don’t respect themselves, after being proposed they just accept and they tell each other that I have already slept with her just go and she will accept they do this because you don’t have a husband but if you have got husband they don’t come they know that you are alone. Florence: if they knck you scream that a thief! If you didn’t agree.

- Florence (with a very low voice) he used to be happy because there are some ways of finding money, others bad and others good, other men they don’t work in the field only a woman working alone in the field, even maize after harvesting a husband is always happy. Florence: after selling your crops you can buy a shirt for him, shoes and he can be always happy. Charity you also buy sugar, but if you are doing prostitution most of the men are not happy, it pains him. Florence (low voice) they pretend as if they have got a good behaviour but after staying for along period of time he gets used and change the behaviour, they say that I will stay here and I will not go. You call his parents but imagine you have stayed with him for along time and gave birth to a lot of children, they say that you want to eat alone the money from children.


- Because they are not educated although he/she is educated they face some problems like going for ganyu others are lazy. Charity: the money of Malawi has got a low value different with others, others if they are educated they don’t know how to farm, if they didn’t learn how to work in the field they face some problems, in our village we don’t have enough companies, only [large commercial estate], many companies are in town but not in villages. Florence: I will go with you, in Malawi we give birth to a lot of children and we fail to take care of them, they go for injection but they still give birth and others die or they get ill because of injection. I gave birth to 10 children but 3 of them died.

B 5 Holy

2. Amaphunzira kwambiri ndi azibambo, amai ambiri aiy ndiye ntchito zimavuta, abambo ena amakwatiirikwawira pomwe azimayi amafuna banja. Azibambo amazitenga kuti ali ndi udindo okwaniro olo akawatire samadandaula, nanga si mkazi amadikira kufunsiridwa:

- Most of men areeducated but women not and it is difficult to find job. Some men get married everywhere (just exchange women) while women wants marriage men think that they have got a big responsibility, they can just get married, because a woman always wait
to be proposed.

3. Azibambo mwina amakhala ndi zipangizo monga geni kumangamanga, ena ntchito malingana ndi maphunzi awo - azimayi timachuluka kuti mwina bajeti ya ndalama imavuta - akanakhala kuti ena amabwera ndi ngongole bola bwenzi azimayi akumatenga ndi kuyamba geni - zoona pali ndi azimayi ake ena akapeza ndalama amangodya koma ena monga ngati chaka chino anapeza chimanga chambiri ena pang’ono, koma amene anapeza chimanga chambiri adya mpaka chaka chamawa, koma ena olo apeze chambiri mabanja amawavuta, samakhala pansi ndi kuganiza. Iwowo amazitenga kuti ali ndi mphamvu, kuti amuwona mzimayi akufunsira zimakhala za chilendo:

- Other men have got BS others are builders, others are working somewhere according to their education level, most of women we don’t know how to make a budget if there was some people who give loan at least most of the women could have borrowed and started a BS. Its true there are some women who find money and eat the same time but others this year they harvested a lot of maize while others not a lot. And those who harvested a lot of maize will eat till next year but others although they harvested a lot, it is difficult for them to make a budget they don’t sit down and think, they think that they are strong, but if they can see a woman proposing it can be a new thing to us.

4. Azimai ambiri amavomera mamuna wina mwamuna akamva limatha ena amakambirana - abambo amasiya mkazi umamva kuti ali ndi chibwenzi basi kenako kutha banja:

- Most of women accept another husband and when her husband hear the story they end marriage. Others they discuss, a husband leaves a wife, you also hear that he has a girlfriend and the marriage ends.

Ee amavomera kuti nayenso adye nawo nanga si amai achulika abambo kuchepa chifukwa azimai akubadwa ambiri kuchipatala monga ine ndili ndi ana akazi 5 mamuna m’modzi - ee ndicholinga choti ngati thandizo likusowa amati mwina ndikamulola uyu andipatsa zambiri:

- Yes, she used to accept although she is married inorder to eat the money because we are many women than men, because at hospital they are a lot of women who are born for example in my family I have got 5 girls and 1 boy, because it isdifficult to take care of themselves and they say that if I will accept this man that means he will be able to give me enough.

5. Azimayi ena amakhala akupilira kuti olo ndione mavuto bola ndili pa banja chomwe
amafuna pa banja ndi zoti pali zipangizo zina monga pakhomo pamafunika agwire mamuna mkazi sangathe, komanso kuti anthu adziwalemekeza, chifukwa nthawi zambiri ngati suli pa banja amati ndi hule akufuna chiwerewere ndiye pokana zimenezo amakhalabe mwinba ena amakhala kuti uhule sakuchita:

- Other women they just accept what their husband’s are doing they say that although I am facing a lot of problems but am married, they want marriage because there are other things that she can not done by a man, and also that people should respect her because most of the time if you are not married they say that you are a prostitute, you want sex and in order to refuse that word they just stay but not doing prostitution.

Basi chikhaliidwe pomuona munthu m’mene akuwonekera jealousy basi! Ndimomwe akuwonekera: Its their culture, after seeing the way you are looking - its just jealousy, according to her appearance.

6. Nthawi zina azimai omwe asali pa banja amakhala akuwalankhula abambo omwe ali pa banja, ndiye mamuna akakhala ndi mtima woti ameneyu andidziwe kuti ndine mamuna amafsira, akufunsira banja silimayenda - monga chitsanzo ine ndimakhala bwino ndi amuna anga kumatukuka koma pali anthu ena samakondwera amafuna kuti bambowa andisiye awafunsire koma chifukwa chopemphera amuna anga amati uyu ndi mkazi yemwe mulungu anandipatsa. Amatha kufika pakhomo pake kumusangalalira - kutenga mphatso kwa mkazi ili yomukopera mamuna. Ngati ali ndi ziweto nkhuku olo chakudya chilichonse kapena kuwaitana kunyumba kuti ndili ndi mawu akapita kumeneko basi kucheza kenako kuwakopa, amakhala ozungulira nanga si zimene zikuchitika pakhomo panga amakhala akuwona:

- Sometimes a woman who is not married used to talk to a man who is married and if a man says that let me show her that I am a man they propose her, and you start facing some problems in your family for example I stay well with my husband and we have improved but some people are not happy with it, they want my husband to leave me alone and propose them, but because we like praying my husband says that am his wife and it's a gift from God. They can go to his house and being proud with him, taking a gift to a wife in order to attract your husband, if she has got livestock e.g chicken or food or anything or else they call him by saying that “come home I have got a word for you” then they chat and attract them, they are neighbours because they are able to see what you do everyday in your daily life.

Mwachitsanzo momwe ine ndinadwalira akanakhala kuti babwowa ofuna kupanga zomwe ena akuchita, kudwala kwa ine nditafuluza anthu ena anandichita chipongwe samasangalala nane, ee anthu ena ndiwoyandikana nawo basi jealousy, kuti amene aja ndi olemera. Kudya tsiku lililionse, mwa ineyo ndi amuna anga akanakhala ena akanapita kwa
Asing’anga koma ine ndi amuna anga timalimbikira kupemphera basi kusala kudya. Ndiye mulungu amayankha panopa anasiya, sing’anga sitimamukhulupilira chifukwa mulungu ndi amene anamulenga:

- For example according to the way I was ill, if my husband wanted to follow what others do, we could have divorced. After finding out according to the way I was ill some people bewitched me, they are not happy with me - ee they are just neighbours, its jealousy, that am rich - eating everyday, with my husband if it was someone else he could have gone to the traditional doctor, but with my husband we just work hard in praying by fasting and God answered as of now they stopped, we don’t believe in a traditional doctor, because its God who created him.

7. Sangafune ngati mamuna akupeza chilichonse: She cannot need a husband if she is able to find her needs.

8. Mazenera a ndalama sanatseguke chifukwa chaka chino anthu alima koma mpoaka pano sanagulitse ndiye amene alima chimanga chambiri, thonje lambiri sakudandaula akudziwa kuti ndidzingodya, akagulitsa thonje ndalama agula zinthu zina. Koma pali anthu ena oti anangolima thonje lambiri kuti adzagula chimanga ndiye kuti panopa agulitse thonje agule chimanga, sizandoakwane akhala ndi njala.

- The doors (ways) of finding money are not open because this year people worked in their fields but up to now they have not sold, then those who grow a lot of maize and a lot of cotton are not getting worried they know that they will be just eating, after selling their cotton they will use their money in other things, but they are others who just grow a lot of cotton thinking that after selling they will buy maize as of now they will sell their cotton and buy maize but it will not be enough they will have hunger.

Monday June 1 2009, Mudzi B

Partly (battery problem) taped quick interview with Ayama:

1. Udindo wa mwamuna ndi wotani pa banja? [What is the responsibility of a man when married?]

Kubereka ana, ntchito kumagwira kulima mokwanira, kugula zovala za ana ndi akazi anu. [Get/make children, farm, buy clothes for children and wife]
2. Udindo wa amayi pa banja? [responsibility of woman in marriage?]

*Ndanena kale kuti kuthandizana kulima, kuveka ana. Mwamuna woyendayend, mkazi kuyendayenda sasamala pa banja. Kale kunalibe...* [Helping each other to farm, dress the children. A man wanders around, a woman wanders around not caring for their marriage. In the past there was not this type of behavior]

3. Kalekale anthu amakwatira akazi ambirimbiri, ena kuthandizana kulima, kuveka ana. Mwamuna woyendayend, mkazi kuyendayenda sasamala pa banja. Kale kunalibe...

4. Zimene zapangitsa kuti zisinthe ndi chiyani? [What made these things to change?]

*Zapangiza kusintha monga kale zovala zinali zotchupa, timagula 5 Kwacha, timagula 10 Kwacha, koma pamenepo popanda kusintha [in past eg only had 1 chitenje, putting it on everyday] monga ndanena zinthu zikusintha chifukwa alowa wina, kulamulira zina, alowa wina, kulamulira zina [changing presidents & laws], ndiye zinthu zasintha. Tinalibe ndalama zagula zinthu koma timati kutenga nsalu kumanga apa, mwana wina apa kutenga mwana kumulowetsa mbali yina [didn’t have money, eg putting 2 children with just 1 chitenje], koma mtengo pang’ono komanso banja kukhala [but were able to stay without problems/without complaining that they had just one chitenje eg].*

5. Kwenikweni chimene chimapangitsa kuti azimuna aziyendayenda ndi chiyani? [What makes men to wander around/having casual relationships with many women?]

*Amuna ena mukuona amakhala akumwa mowa, ena osamwa mowa, ndiye wosamwa mowandi amene akusamala, koma akumwa mowa ndi amene sakusamala. [some men drink beer, others no. Those who don’t drink take good care of their family, those who drink do not.]*

6. Kalekale anthu amapanga geni ngati panopa kapena ayi? [Did people do BS in past like now?]

*Koma zasiyana, kale sitimapanga geni, amuna okha. Koma panopa “genda”, mkazi, mwamuna ayenera kuyenda geni [it changed. In past we did not do BS. But now there is “gender”: both men & women able to do BS].*

7. Panopa mukuona kuti azimayi akupeza bwino kuposa kale, kapena ayi, kale ndi pamene azimayi amapeza bwino? [Were women better off in past or now?]

*Lyaiy, koma pano. No, now*

Chifukwa akuzichitira wokha geni. [because they can do BS]

9. Moyo wawo wasinthwa bwanji akamapanga geni? [How does life change through BS?]

Moyo wawo wasinthwa monga ena amagulitsa ndikupeza ndalama zogula zofuna zawo. si
ndagulitsa chakuti ndikufuna chakuti, atenga yekha ndalama ndikugula. [Can buy what
they want]

10. Ena samafunanso mwamuna kuti awathandize? [They don’t want a HB who can help?]

Muone pamenepe zimakhala chonchi amuna sachita geni, akazi ndi kumachita geni
basi, kumangokhala, kumathandizana. [You see now they live like that the husband
does not do BS, then it’s the wife who does BS. They just stay like that, helping each
other.]

11. Tiyerekeze [eg] azimayi akupanga geni, eti? Amafunanso azibambo kuti awakwatire?

[So a woman who does BS, would she want marriage?]

Eee, chimene chimapangitsa kukwatira [something that makes someone to get
married], mwina kuti, ujeniyi, “genda” ipita palsogolo tikhale anthu awiri tithandizani,
eee. [maybe because of this uh, gender, we have to stay two of us, helping each other.]

12. Iwowo amaganiza kuti mwina azimayi akamapanga geni malingana ndi matendawa
sangaganizenso zokwatira sangapewe kumatenda a Edzi? [Janneke is thinking that
maybe when women do BS according to the disease they cannot think of getting
married. What made them to do this?]

Iyayi, amachita. Ena amakana, eya, ena amati tipange geni, ena ndi matenda amenewa
amati tikayezetse ku chipatala.[No, they do want to get married. Others refuse, others say
let’s get our blood tested in the hospital]

13. Inuyu mukuona maganizo mwanu mukuona kuti azimayi atakhala kuti akupanga geni
ndikumakhala wokha wosakwatira sangapewe kumatenda a Edzi? [In your opinion, do you
think that when a woman is doing BS and staying alone without marriage, she cannot
prevent AIDS?]

Kupewa zitha kutheka athakuchepa matendawa atazisamala kupanda kukwatira
chiwerewere osachita. [If they can prevent it can be possible the disease can be less, if they
can take care of themselves without getting married.]

makes women to be dating men?]

Kusauka.[Poverty]

15. Nanga ali ndi geni, akupeza ndalama amafunanso kukwatira chifukwa
chiyani? [If they do BS and find money, why do they want to get married?]

Chiwerewere. [adultry/sex]
16. Komanso zithakutheka kuti ngati akufuna chiwerewere adzigwiritsa ntchito kondomu, kapena kusankha m’modzi amene ali wokhulupirika... [But if they want (a lot of) sex, they could use a condom, or choose a man who is faithful...]

   Ena akutenga makondomu, makamaka atsikana.[some use condoms, especially girls]

17. Monga ngati panopa ndiye kuti aliyense akudziwa za matenda a Edzi? [People know about AIDS?]

   Aliyense akudziwa.[Everybody knows]

18. Ndi chifikwa chiyani matenda awa akupitirire babe [Then why does it continue to spread?]

   Akupitirira akudziwa kumachita chiwerewere, akudziwa kuti kuli matenda... [it continues to spread, they know having sex, they know there are diseases.]

19. Iwo wo amapangilanji zimenezo akudziwa kuti ndi zoipa? [They do it while they know it is dangerous?]

   Alibe khalidwe... [They don’t have proper conduct]

20. Ndiye kuti kapena makolo tinene kuti sanawalere bwino ana awo? [We can say that parents did not raise their children properly?]

   Ena amalera bwino. Kale kunalibe edzi koma kunali matenda ena monga chindoko, mabomu, chizonono. Akatenga mankhwala amachita kukumba [used to dig traditional med] osati kuchipatala. Ena kuchipatala. Koma masiku ano, eee... [Some are raised fine. In the past there was no AIDS but there were other STIs. Then they used to dig traditional medicine, not going to the hospital. Other went to the hospital]

21. Ena sakuopa za matenda, eti? [Some are not afraid?]

   Kusaopa eee... Ena akunena kuti “kodi matenda anabwerera mtengo kapena anthu?”[Not afraid indeed... Some say that “did this disease come for trees or people?]"

22. Zikutanzha chiyani, anthu akumanenena kuti matenda sanabwerera mtengo koma anthu? [What does that mean?]

   Kufuna zimenezo cha chiwerewerezo, amakonda chiwerewere... They want it because of sex, they love sex

Reflection

Poverty/lacking certainly incites/is important reason/cause of many different/overlapping sexual relationships. But development project/BSs do not have any significant impact: too unstable and too small scale, so insecurity remains. So best is both own income AND whatever extras can be found through relationships... But what about women outside of village? Those with jobs, e.g. nurses at [nearest tradingcenter]?
June 13, Sunday: Last interviews Mudzi A II

GVD!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!! Weer voice rec die er mee stopt/microfoon die het opeens niet meer doet... Dus alleen maar zeer beknopte aantekeningen...

1. Months children born?
2. Differences men vs women
3. Why do men usually have more money?
4. If not happy with behavior husband, what will woman do? And viceversa?
5. What are reasons to stay with husband even if not happy with his behavior?
6. Why do many relationships here not last long?
7. When woman is able to take care of herself and kids, will she still want husband? Why?
8. Will husband be happy or feel threatened?
9. Are women better off now or in past?
10. Did some women have oen income in past?
11. As many single women then as now?

1st old women:
husband works on field and takes care of family, But sometimes can be other way around too.
husband and wife should share responsibilities, discuss about who does what. But tasks are different.
Women: fetching water, cooking, kuchapa, sweeping, ulemu kwa abambo. Men: cutting down trees
to build a house, build house, toilet, bafa.
Think differently, are more intelligent (nzeru), just born like that. Can work as carpenter.
Will go to ankoswe after first having tried to discuss the issue with him. Then the ankhoswe will talk
to him, advise him, tell him to change behavior. But when husband unhappy with wife will just
chase her, always means end of marriage.
Herself, marriage ended because of death. But she would have chased him, even though she had
many children (I think she said this, not sure). Others stay together to be receive respect from others.
Smoking chamba, woman afraid that he may kill her because of chamba.
May remember 1 good thing, eg that he brought food, helped on the field, bought clothes. And
because of that 1 good thing will stay with him.
Happy! And woman has to accept him staying because men often just refuse to leave even after
being to told to go.
In past not enough clothes, eg going to school with only blouse and chitenje, no skirt.
Pounding maize & sell, selling bananas/nyemba/maize in town.
Now girls marry younger than in past, but divorce quicker. In past stayed married. Don't know why,
Bible says that this time would come.
Child born in July 2003

Men are able to build houses, women not.

Men can find money easily, women not. Jobs here need strong people = men, eg working in the field, cutting down trees, making bricks, making oven for bricks, making roof... Men and women have been doing different things since the beginning, ever since have just followed behavior of the past.

If woman is unhappy: discuss, if not changing --> end of marriage. But husband will end marriage, no discussion, saying: “You are not the only one, I can find another!” Women won't say that, because a woman can't propose, man has to propose.

Need husband to take care of her children, can't manage alone to feed the child, clothes, maybe schooling. Through death or otherwise disagreements. More now than in past, world is changing...

It's nature (chilengedwe). Gertrude: People cannot stay without sex, many say “can't control nature” = ndi kovuta kudziletsa kuchilengedwe.

husband not worried if woman takes care of the family.

Belita


Women stay at home, take care of kids, are busy fetching water, cooking, cleaning dishes, sweeping. Men just wake up and stay. After building the house they feel they can relax...

True, men usually have more money. Are more intelligent, better at running BS, women could learn a lot from men. Men keep time/do things quickly (changu), while women delay doing first this and that. Men can also go far to find money to start a BS, maybe go to the lake, while women can only do BS's near the house, making mandasi or beer. Women may have a plan for BS but difficult to find money to start. Gertrude later adds: Women do things without really thinking it over, while men do think things through better.

Woman: sit down and discuss. Man too - if he likes her.

Thinking “who will marry me?” Ignorance, not educated.

Not married women will be suspected of sleeping with husband of married women. When her husband is out, a wife may think he is with the single woman.

Wife challenges, quickly suspects her husband to be in relationship with another woman while he may just be chatting with her, and chases him without asking what is the matter. Men quickly propose to many other women...

Happy, because he can just stay and eat. Will even deliberately look for richer women, with iron sheet roof, so he can just be eating. Woman will accept his proposal, because needs to see his behavior first. Wants marriage to be respected, whether he is poor or not.

Mother Belita (slightly drunk...)

Ah, women are more intelligent! They stay at home, cook and be full/satisfied. Work in their fields, guide husband on what to do. While men they just do things without thinking, are all over the place, moving around, kumowa, only think of drinking beer. When a woman advises him, he just says: “Don’t tell me what to do! I know everything!” That’s why so many women in Mudzi A are not married while they are being proposed! Most people here are Muslims, uneducated. In past we were encouraged to go far in school, and education changes behavior, one knows about future and past. When not, just like a mad man, without direction...

A couple may work together in their cotton field, but after selling the husband will put all the money in his pocket, not sharing with his wife. Wife will accept, afraid that otherwise their banja will end, that he may get angry.

Chase him. Chase her and find another wife.

Some husbands use traditional medicine not to be chased, to keep the women quiet, just accepting, make
her think: Ah whatever... (Kaya, kaya... which Gertrude translated as 'anyway, anyway...').

People don't sit down to discuss, just want to go and sleep with another wife. Mowa, chamba...

Desire (chilakolako)... It has been written by God in the Bible, demanding that a man should not stay alone, needs to be with a wife. Rib-story.

Amasangalala! [They are happy/like it!]“She is working hard while I am eating!” Women are weak, can't do much but accept.

Again referring to biblical rib-story, in which God created women from man's rib.

In past had only 1 chitenje. These days it is easier to find clothes for oneself and children. In past very low prices for produce, 2 bags of maize for 1 coin, 1 Tambala. After selling a full nkhokwe of maize you could buy 1 thing only, now much more,

Woman with husband in SA = Zara, daughter-in-law of Meriam June 1995,


Man: making house, roof. Is strong while woman is weak.

Men are able to find jobs, can move around looking for jobs.

Sit down and discuss, both.

Women just want marriage. Maybe they stayed alone for a long time, waiting for somebody to propose to them...

Misunderstandings...

To build a bafa, toilet. Thinking that she will not manage alone.

Happy that he can just stay while she finds what they want! Woman accepts this because of love (chikondi), just wants to be married.

Meriam


Men are strong & like beer; women weak.

Women just follow their husband's therefore don't find more money themselves. Unless she in independent (kuima pa yehka).

Discuss so that each can do what they want. Some think of divorcing. Same for men and women.

Stay with the same husband because another may be just the same, but may not be taking care of her children from the other man...

Kusapilira = don't think, just act (zie woordenboek!)

Can not happen, that a woman is able to take care of herself and kids and then still wants a husband!

If she is strong and is doing good BS, nothing will bother her (when I suggest finding problems in community as single woman).

Happy, most are used to that. Just sit back and eat. If he wouldn't be happy with it he would tell the wife to stop BS and take the responsibility of running BS himself. Woman will just accept because she wants banja, it's nature...

Sandala


After coming back from the field together women still have to fetch water, find ndiwo, cook, while men just stay and wait to eat. Men are stronger in finding money than women, because they think of looking for ganyu while women don't wish to go for ganyu, thinking they have a husband for that - that's how it is in village life.

See 2

Can go to organizations these days, called ‘Nkhanza za banja’, will take the case to court. husband may do the same, or just leave and find another wife.
Comparing hid good and bad behavior, remembering the good things and stay for that reason, especially if one has kids: will another man take care of them?

Many girls these days have children without being married. When a man is married for some time, he may think of going to these girls, especially if his wife has been rude, and check out these girls. With children, because those are more likely to accept easily.

Seeing friends be married, jealous, want that too, eg working in field together. Thinking: what if I get ill?

Happy, although wife will not be happy, because she is just busy will the husband just staying. May accept it just out of desire for the husband. Or thinking that although this one is just staying, at least he is able to use the money properly while another one may misuse it.

Has not started her mandasi BS again. Told me last time she wanted to take loan from CUMO (10,000, paying back 10,700 MK, in 4 months, first pay back after 2 weeks: 1550, but first must pay a deposit of 1500MK), but not all members were able to come up with the deposits, so never got loan... husband still working at Mpaweni Lodge at Liwonde.

Alinafe (grandmother still at church) June

Alinafe (grandmother still at church) June


Women: cook, fetching water, chat with other women. Men: go to work, make bafa & toilet, cutting down trees, chatting with other men.

Men have jobs, work hard on their own. Find jobs because work harder in school, while girls get pregnant and stay at home.

Tell him it's good to divorce because you are mistreating me. husband: discuss, and if she is not changing her behavior, find other wife.

Friends & parents may advise you to accept his behavior & stay. But when they sit down with you and hear what is the problem, may encourage you to indeed divorce, eg when current husband is mistreating child of previous man. Or one of the couple may be a witch, trying to convince the other to kill one of the children, may lead to quarrels and divorce.

By if husband is lazy, when woman is just working on the field alone, she may decide to send him away. Or if he likes women, wife not happy about that and divorce.

Because of nature: chilengedwe, ndi chovuta, con't control...

Not happy, otherwise would have helped each other, will divorce.

Mother Victoria = Yona (V at church)

Nvt

Men: kumanga manyumba [build houses], cutting down trees, finding jobs, work in field, make law in the house, is head of family, wife has to listen (he won't accept what wife says, but wife will accept what he says). Men have better jobs (although women can have good jobs too these days). Are more intelligent and strong. I think I heard her say something like “nzeru zawo amaona tsogolo” - looking ahead.

Eg when he beats her, she may go to ankhoswe time and again to complain. While husband will just think of divorcing. He may go to work, fearing that his wife is moving around with other men, bringing home diseases, or that he'll encounter one of her boyfriends on his way back home and will have to fight - better divorce.

Thinking that “maybe he will change, maybe he will change…” Kupilira (many women used this word): just accepting without complaining or refusing.

Many (men) are not satisfied with what they have, kukomedwa, easily attracted. And thus not faithful...

Nature... God says it in the Bible, it is important to have a husband. What reasons may a woman have to
stay single? Mavuto, maybe he was mistreating her... But why not looking for other husband? Maybe she will be unlucky again, better to stay alone...

If the couple decides together on the expenditure it is ok. But some husbands just demand the money, threatening to beat woman and will use it to drink beer. Husband may then later say that he will do whatever the woman had wanted to use the money for, eg build a toilet, and she will accept.

Now women can find better jobs. In past women had better behavior, now if they have money want to show off to others. In past not educated, now better educated.

Answers make more sense when knowing background of respondent!

Aug 3, Baweanstraat, Amsterdam

Jan advises me to read: The worldly philosophers.

School girls from Gertrude's secondary school class: wanted hair extensions and nice clothes to show off to fellow girls that men were interested in them rather than to attract men.

Project staff anecdotes:

CUMO extension worker
MRFC field staff

“We try, they fail” mentaliteit

Aug 10 2009, Baweanstraat, Amsterdam

Katoenverkoop begonnen!!

Texts messages Gertrude:

10 Aug: Goodmorning they have started buying cotton today at 42Mk [large commercial estate] [small crossroads market] and B. village. I talked to GVH and Innocent but Molly said that may be this afternoon they will start buying at 75Mk am ready to go on wensday to make sure that they have indeed started and i will see when to come back.
Hie! husband of Sofia has died by car accident yesterday, GVH told me today, good day! [30 juli 2009]

Good night! I am happy because I talked to the director at school about computer and they arranged a teacher for me and I have started today but my mother called and said that my sister is HIV p (the one who is on the picture) wishing you all the best. Greet feye friends and parents. [28 juli 2009]

27 juli: Good morning! I talked to Wongani and she said that she will finish typing this week, is it ok to give her what i have been translating to type now and when i will go to Balaka for cotton i will find another notebook to use.

I have started & there is 4 subjects: Sociology, Language communication, Rural and development 1, Health community. Everything is just the same as what we have been doing at Balaka & other lessons are like what Langmwale is doing, and we will be learning 3 days per week with 2 subjects per day monday, wednesday and friday. It’s from 8 am to 1 pm about cotton they have started i talked to husb of Jasmine, good luck! [15 juli 2009] - on phone told me she is only girl in class of 8/9 students, 1 boy misbehaving, already expelled for week. And that she already sold all the knittings she made in vlg!

Good morning! Am fine icalled Livia this morning asking about cotton and she said that up to now it is not known, good day and greet everybody. [july 6 2009]

Yes imanaged, but about computer some told me that they just teach once a week and sometimes not. then i talked to Beston college at A25 for computer only during weekend and they said they will arrange! All the best! [June 29 2009]

Am fine. ilistened from the radio on saturday and they said that they had their discussions at balaka and the results not announced icalled Livia today and she said they have not started, mu weekend was nice just watching some films to the landlord.greet everybody too Missing! [June 29 2009]

June 24: Icalled Kingsley&husband of vanesa Jasmine and they all said that they have not yet started and they dont know anything greetings to you all.

Aug 12

Text message Gertrude: Hie! Am in the village in the house of Sofia, she is still in the same house, she has 3 bags of maize and she will eat up to Dec a bag of maize is at 2000 here and if you can give her 5000 [as I had suggested on phone on 10th] she can buy extra maize, about cotton things are not going well only [large commercial estate] is buying at 42MK but iwill go tomorrow and check mr Ntawanga told me that they are buying secret because Bingu said that they should buy at 75mk, others said buyers will come tomorrow to buy in the vg,but iwill move around in the vg to find out.Good night

Aug 13

Text message Gertrude: Hie! [large commercial estate] is indeed buying at 42mk, iwent there and italked to 1 of the buyers and he said that they decided to buy because farmers went to complain and the government is not buying but here in the vg people are failing to sell because its far and at [large commercial estate] they told me
that there car has started moving around in vgs collecting cotton. Rosemary’s family moved to F. village, Livia married for 2wks only. Good day!

Aug 15

Good afternoon! Ifollowed 6women from Mudzi B who went to sell there cotton at Ch. village since morning and the buyers have come right now, but they are buying at 42mk. Tomorrow i want to see if buyers will come at Mudzi A, but ihave already taken the statistics of [clinic] and on Monday i will be back.

Aug 17

Text Gertrude: Hie! 11 people from Mudzi B has sold. But at Mudzi A others told me that they are waiting for the buyers, Venesi&Molly are waiting for the price to be high, a lot of them wants to buy food & clothes. Am on way to Lilongwe now. Talk to you later!

Aug 18

Text Gertrude: Good afternoon! I will sent tomorrow morning to Mr Chamango, Igave 5000mk to Sofia, 2000mk to Jasmine, everybody said thanks a lot to you! The money that you gave me at the airport was 1600mk, and I spent 3.915mk mine. I bought beans, sugar, salt, paraffin, airtime, matches & transport good lucky! [Baleke gemaild 11.000Mk aan Gertrude te geven van geld dat ik eerder naar ICRISAT heb overgemaakt]

Aug 19

Sprak op Wiebe’s verjaardagsfeestje in Vondelpark met XXX, die blij was mij een keer te ontmoeten. Zit zelf ook in dat vakgebied: schoolvakbond maar op internationaal niveau, UNICEF etc. Was ook al paar keer in Malawi, maar alleen Lilongwe en Blantyre, zaten in sjiek hotel, kan zich het Italiaanse restaurant herinneren. Had wel zin er weer eens heen te gaan: “Dan regel ik gewoon een of andere meeting, ja zo gaat dat toch?” Ook zei hij, toen ik vertelde over strategisch antwoorden etc van dorpelingen, manipuleren/braaf zeggen wat er van ze verwacht wordt: “Maar dan doen wij toch net zo goed? Als we een projectvooorstel voor de Wereld Bank oid schrijven...”

Jan 26, 2010

Text Gertrude: Hi For the results, they said that it takes 12 weeks after writing then we are expecting mid feb, many thanks for a good explanation on my assignment [why birth control efforts fail in many developing countries, focus on own country] & you know what! [bericht dat ik zwanger ben?] am just happy when iam receiving & sending mails everything is a miracle, am ready to knit what you want. But an earthquake passed on 13Jan but it didn’t destroy anything, Lilongwe salima and downa my house checked for 3 min i was afraid after remembering what has happened in chikwawa BYEE!

Feb 6: gesprek met XXX

Deed beetje schimpend over IS-Academy initiatief van BuZa - voor hij wist dat ik daar bij zit. Leuke poging, maar niet erg effectief. Beleid en onderzoek gewoon moeilijk te combineren,
mn vanwege andere tijdsspanne/behoefte: voor beleid snel, maar onderzoek heeft tijd nodig. WRR rapport noemt dat ook als probleem: erg weinig expertise bij BuZa, plus steeds veranderende agenda (maar onvermijdelijk want steeds nieuwe regering en minister, dus al zou Koenders advies van 10 landen volgen, volgende minister zou dat zo weer terug kunnen draaien). XXX: BuZa is echt een apenrots, iedereen gewoon voor zichzelf bezig, weinig expertise. Onderzoekers voor beleid zitten bij KIT, KIT krijgt veel geld van BuZa om beleidsadviezen aan hen uit te brengen. Bij Wageningen Uni krijgen geld van Min van Landbouw, maar moet allemaal snelsnelsnel. Binnen 3 maanden moet advies er liggen dus kan je weinig diepgaand, uitgedacht onderzoek in doen, mag geen wetenschap heten, vindt hij. Dat ik dan nu, volledig onervaren en binnen een maand even de onderlinge verbanden tussen thema’s moet gaan aanwijzen, slaat ook nergens op, weinig zinvol, moet veel structureler, zegt ook WRR. Wel goed, WRR, zegt XXX, er moet echt iets veranderen, moest echt nodig aan de kaak worden gesteld.

Uit Baseline interviews:

AIDS ed

One of the sons of Chenawe (70, 3nd marriage) died last year after being ill for long time, his wife (who also had children with other man) died 2 weeks ago. Chenawe will go to pick up the ones of her son to stay with her, and register these orphans as living at HER HH not there!

9. Magda (63, 2nd marriage) hires young boys to help on field, weeding, for 20/30MK. “Adults need more money, but young boys work cheap.” Have beautiful house that was built for them by son who had gone to Chancellor College and worked in Blantyre, but died. Another son was teacher, died too. The only other working child is a nurse, she has to take of all the orphans now, therefore difficult to take care of parents too...

Female entrepreneurship

Agnessi Musitafa (42, married) follows tailor training course in Balaka town, organized by an Indian organization Axa. Came to mosque to tell people about opportunity. Others found it too far to travel 3 days a week to Balaka, she leaves by foot at 5AM to arrive there at 8AM. Training takes 1 yr 5 months, at end all receive a sewing machine. Next month will be a holiday for cultivating the fields. Almost ready with training.

Charity (20, pregnant & divorced): Had her independent income buying & selling tomatoes, masamba and green maize with which she “bought salt when her husband was not around to take care of her.”

Sister Florence (23, married) also used to buy and sell veggies, but stopped temporarily now to cultivate her land. Buys at dimba some half hour walk from vlgl. Used
Mrs Ntawanga (46, second marriage): “We women try to make business, but it is difficult to find money to start.” E.g. Selling clothes, or fish.

Saibi (25, divorced & with baby from other man): Father (Catholic Ngoni) of last child just passed by and so came to know each other. He comes every now and then, but lives elsewhere with other wife. He doesn’t want to get married with her yet, but she does because “amalima…” [he farms…] Other wife knows about her and baby, Saibi went to his vlg, wife saw her, but didn’t do anything. Has her own (small) income from buying and selling tomatoes & masamba. Business will be better in coming hunger months: people now still have own harvests of nandolo and other ndiwo, but will finish soon and then they will buy.

Woman passed by house, girls & women at our veranda commented: “That one, she is going to sell tomatoes rather than taking care of her husband. And always goes to the same village to sell, where she is seen with a certain man…”

Suset (23, divorced & with baby of other father) brews & sells kachasu at her house, taught by grandmother Kima. All year round BS. Evening before interview 3 costumers, 250 MK. Other women in the vlg are not angry with her for supplying their husbands with beer, for taking in their HH money - “they shout at their husbands, not me, they know it is business…” Profit from BS not enough to survive hunger season, will sometimes spend all income on food and other HH needs, and than has to borrow to buy ingredients for Kachasu (madeya & sugar) - which she then pays back after selling. Did ganyu too.

Grandmother Kima (65, divorced) also brews beer. Started in 1987 when her marriage ended. husband left her in 1984 when he became rich through his work as mechanic at several companies. Learned brewing from mother. With income buys maize for food and ingredients for kachasu. Could buy 2 bags of fert last season [not only BS, sell pigs from club each yr to find money for fertilizer]! But also did ganyu… Says that for non-BS women it is difficult to find things on their own, are afraid to borrow or beg to start a BS. BS women can easily find the things they need, like soap, sugar, salt. But because of BS may not receive handouts: That one has BS, has iron sheets, will not receive…”

Teleza (28, divorced) sometimes makes mandasi, buys & sells bananas/fish at the primary school to school kids. But too small profit to live of, just to buy some soap, salt, ndiwo. Hired & did ganyu. Sold goat to pay for ganyu, will sell another this season to buy maize. Lives in nice house with cement & iron sheets - paid by mother who traded second hand clothes. Says she has no starting capital to start same BS, and wasn't around when they registered for Concern Universal loans. Would like to be buying and selling maize, but needs more capital for this. Why not sell goat? Too small investment [onzin!].
Would like a MADEF loan, but not Concern Universal because of rigid payback rules. Villagers complained at MADEF that they had to come here; MADEF told them to open an account, which they did, but MADEF never showed up again...

Victoria (38, divorced) would like to start BS, e.g., buy & sell beans or fish, but lacks capital to start, she says (but is building a new house, does have money for that).

Sandala (28, 1st marriage) started making & selling mandasi last August, to help HH, difficult to depend on husband alone, she decided. Spends 400MK on ingredients (flour, salt, sugar, yeast, ufa, cooking oil), sells about 65 a 10MK = 250MK profit. Started up with money after selling cotton (bought clay pot and basin, ingredients, oil for frying). Sells on Thursdays at [small crossroads market], at Fridays at [nearest trading center] market. Says it now not difficult to satisfy daily needs, if she wants breakfast she can buy some. Uses profit sometimes for HH, sometimes for herself (chitenje, clothes, body lotion). Used to do ganyu, but expects that will not be necessary anymore because of business. [Difference between rural BS women and non-BS women?] For BS woman it is not difficult to find things she needs while others have to do ganyu. [Why do not all women have BS?] Lack capital or are lazy… Stays ok with husband. Went to St 8, benefits in BS, knowing whether she makes profit or not [but first answer was that she doesn’t benefit, only when I then specifically ask whether also in her BS she notices no benefit…]. Before husband used to decide on expenditure, now she, because it is her business. By she decided to use her mandasi money to buy radio. Living now from maize bought with mandasi BS money.

Maria (22, left behind) lives with her son (2003) at mother, bothers and sisters. Works at a shop in [nearest trading center], selling soap, biscuits, cooking oil etc. Since 3 months, owner sent one of his kids to ask her. Six days/week, making 3500MK/month. Money is used for food and other HH needs, and to pay ganyu labor. The family will not have to do ganyu this year, but can hire. Salary will not be enough to fully feed the HH of 7 though, as her income is the only one. Doesn’t want leave mother and use her salary just for herself and son because people will talk, thinking that they didn’t stay well together.

Belita (46, second marriage) brews kachasu, learned from her mother. Started in 1980 at mother’s place, and started brewing at home after leaving first husband in 1986. Ong 10 costumers per day, 5 bottles sell for 800/1000 MK. Uses profit to buy soap, paraffin, chigayo. Even though she had own income, wanted to marry again, e.g., to build her a house, can’t do that herself. Says she decides on spending, but Radio and bike purchase both decided by husband… Still does ganyu too, BS does not bring enough money. Especially this time of the year, people are mostly at fields. Best selling times from May-Sept, after cotton sales.
Serena (57, married) started her business in 1982, first sold chigumu, but saw everybody at market selling chigumu and therefore switched to kanyenya: small dried fish in a layer of fried batter. Learned from her sister who also made these, sold both at the primary school - she died now though… Does not sell at market because most people there rather buy mandasi, which is bigger and more filling. Buys the matemba dried fish once a week at Mangochi turn of, buys 5ltr bucket full at 800MK, plus transport 300MK. Fries in morning and sells from Monday to Friday at 2MK/piece, earns about 300/400MK/day these days, but in cotton selling season up to 1000MK (not profit!). Ingredients: matemba, flour, salt, ufa, oil. With profit: soap, chigayo, school fees, salt, lotion, sugar. Decides herself as husband is away working in Mwanza, but for large expenses like bike (after cotton sale), she called husband to discuss (ask advice?). Decided to start BS because husband had no work, they faced problems in their HH, her idea. Now proud of what she had accomplished: can buy school uniforms for her children! Says non-BS women just stay and have to beg for e.g. salt, they find it easier to beg, while for BS women there is no need to beg, can buy all she needs herself… When asked about impact of BS on relationship with husband, says defensively that are still well together.

- Melina (DIL Eveles, 44, 1st marriage) learned how to make a tree nursery and started one herself. Will start selling again in Jan/Feb, that's when people buy to plant (for shade or medicine), a 15 MK. Uses money for HH, large part goes to school fees of kids. Soon they will also have to pay for the ceremony when that son finishes Form 4.

- Ellia (23, left behind) buys firewood in villages around Mudzi A, telling people it is for her own use to keep prices down, than walks all the way to Balaka with a normal size bundle of firewood (100MK), to sell there or exchange for madeya ufa. But does ganyu too.

- Filimona (22, 1st marriage): husband is son of Hamra came from Mudzi A to her vlg selling tomatoes and asked someone where he could find an unmarried girl. The someone was a friend of Filimona and told him to ask for her. Stayed in relationship for 1 month before marriage. Was first proposal. Says she got married in 2002, had 3 children between 2004 and 2008. Chisoni later says the first 2 children are not from her current husband though… Says in interview she has no independent income, but Gertrude sees her selling tomatoes, also MIL Hamra was selling tomatoes on behalf of Filimona and told Gertrude that F has a field at dimba where she grows tomatoes. Her husband decided on expenditure because “anzeru”: he has more wisdom.

- Sweetness (35, 2nd marriage) lived with parents when man came: Ndikukufunani chibwenzi. She agreed and in coming 2 months asked around about his behavior. Friends said he's good because he works in the field and doesn't drink beer. Those 2 months he brought soap, salt, money (which he found through ganyu) - she didn't beg, he just gave. Divorced after 2 yrs because she found he was drinking beer... Then she decided to start mandasi BS. Found money through ganyu, but only did it for few months, then used money to help mother who had problems and couldn't continue. After 2 yrs another man proposed, banja ipv chibwenzi (others also proposed but she was afraid of same behavior as first husband), but she refused so as to first find out about his behavior: ulimi & BS of fish -
is a hard worker. After 2 wks he came to her house with his sister as witness who told her he is good, you will see - then agreed an up to now no problems.

- Christina (34, 3x divorce) [looking ill, chifuwa every month...] was chatting with girl who told her brother was looking for wife, is working in Blantyre: “Are you going to like him? He will come nxt month...” Came indeed, saying “ndikukufunani banja”, she agreed and waited 2 months while he returned to Blantyre. During marriage provided everything. Divorced because he wanted to marry other wife, but she didn’t and decided to divorce. Had one child, after divorce she started working at [large commercial estate]. Met here with second husband who proposed chibwenzi, she just agreed. Was giving me soap, salt, clothes & was loving me. Married after 4 months. At first he was still doing everything like pachibwenzi, but after 2 yrs started proposing other woman. In 1999 told her he was going to marry another, she said “I cannot manage to stay with man with 2 wives” and decided to divorce. Started working at Dwangwa Ilovo company to find money to feed kids. After parents died she went back to Mudzi B in 2004. Here a man said he wanted banja and she just agreed. After week got married, didn’t ask around about his behavior, but was good husband because provided everything. But now he has just disappeared without saying anything to propose to a woman in Mzuzu and meet her relatives. After cotton sale, husband used all the money for himself.

- Jasmine (56, 1st marriage) has BS of making zigumu and sell at Balaka market, since 1970. Husband wasn’t working, only worked in field (together), she decided to start BS as she saw the problems/needs of the HH, husband gave money to start BS. Goes about once a week, spends 500 MK on ingredients (maize, sugar, oil, soda, salt) and earns about 700 MK = 200 MK profit. Balaka is big market, sometimes she sells all, left overs she takes home for kids. When she wants to start again, goes for ganyu to get money for ingredients. Beginning of Nov: sold a goat for over 4000MK (someone came to her house to buy), and 4 pigs of the pig club were sold (for much less than their value, but nonetheless brought in money). Now making bread (taught by Gertrude), selling in vlg and at [small crossroads market] on Thursday, also zigumu. In Oct traded potatoes. Says while chatting that she also used to trade fish, but now the lake is closed. And rice when it’s in season. Her loan from Concern Universal she used for buying fertilizer and added to her zigumu BS, has paid back by now. Doesn’t take new loan because difficult to pay back. At least with MADEF the first payback is after 2/3 months, while Concern after 2 weeks. MADEF had come to Mudzi B 3 yrs ago, but never came back. Bought a bike after selling their cotton this year (2.5 bale at 24000MK in June to traders passing by) to go to the hospital, chigayo. [Saw her grandsons pass by on Nov 13 with bag of fertilizer on bike, bit later he passes again, with chicken and eggs - to bring to someone who is buying].

- Innocent (19, abondoned, 1 child) is now making mandasi, which she has sold in vlg of sister-in-law, borrowed 2000MK to start + received 1000MK from parents. Ingredients app 500MK, profit 250/300 after 3 days selling. [But stopped again soon after, had spent
money on food, nothing left for reinvestment…]  

- Madalitso (45-50, almost divorced 2x) met first husband working a field here in Mudzi B. She thought he’d make a good husband since he was working in the field. After 3 yrs working in field together he wanted to work somewhere else, just disappeared and never returned. She stayed alone for 4 yrs with 3 kids - difficult to manage, did ganyu. Met 2nd husband doing ganyu together. Chatted and found both were unmarried and decided to marry. Again thought he is good, as he was working in the field at that moment. But after about a yr he started drinking beer day in day out, morning to evening. Hoped he would change, advised him to change, to no avail. She now decided to end the marriage, informed ankhoswe, waiting for them to return. Advantage of being married to this man: He helped her build the house, helped pay for new grass roof recently. They do ganyu together, but he uses his share mainly for beer. Couldn’t explain why she continues to feed him. Said she only found money through ganyu, but when we came to give her picture, she had gone to Mangochi to buy fish for BS!

- Lovely (29, 1st marriage) married at 13 when she and husband were both employed at a farm (contract). She knew the guy from vlg, he 5 yrs older. After receiving their salaries, he would give her some as she earned less. Soon her first child was born (possibly married because pregnant thus…). husband left May 2007 to SA, hasn't seen him since, but they talk 3x/wk over phone (which she owns, charges at [nearest tradingcenter] ). He sends her items (screen, phone chargers) and money via others who come back from there to here. He went because of “umphawi”, following younger brother. With money he sends, she can hire ganyu. Will be able to eat till March from harvest, but is cooking with smaller pots already. Before husband left they did not have enough food.

- When husband of Blessings (28, 1st marriage) left for SA he arranged her brother to stay with his wife and kids. Blessings decided on expenditure, as she is “the owner of the family/kids”. She joined him in SA for 2 yrs (cooking, washing etc in HH), wants to go back as it makes her proud to work in SA. Returned when she found herself pregnant, but will return when this one is old enough to be left behind = 3 yrs (also left other kid at 3).

- Kondwani (35, left - sister of chief Mudzi B) trades in cassava. Buys far away (D. vlg) where there is cassava, here not. Walks & carries on head. Started this yr because “kuvutika”. Heard about it from friend who does same. Sells at [small crossroads market], everyday (except Friday: mosque). But today had things to do around the house [not seen her at [small crossroads market], is usually in vlg). Buys at 200, sells at 400. Uses money for HH needs (soap, maize, clothes for kids, chigayo, grass for new roof). After selling works in field.

- Tinenenji (21, 1st marriage) grows (at dimba) and sells tomatoes to buy soap, salt,
chigayo, clothes, paraffin. She decides on expenditure of own income. Husband buys tomatoes elsewhere at larger scale and sells them at Liwonde every day - his BS brings most money. Money used for same items as hers - decide together. But husband decided the purchase of bed, radio, bike. Some money is saved to buy food in coming months. Early Nov Gertrude saw her go to [tiny crossroads market] (‘grocery’) to sell groundnuts. Divorced after husband found her at night with ex-husband of Fatima, who later got back with Fatima again. Pregnant from this man, when Fatima heard, she left husband.

Thandizo (59, divorced) married at about 15 yrs old. The man proposed to her parents first, who asked her, she allowed because afraid of becoming pregnant by an unserious man (granddaughter Tinenenji laughs hard), better to get married. Dated 3 months, he had job somewhere, brought her sugar, biscuits, clothes. He left her after 22 yrs & 9 kids (5 died). She managed because strong, could work the field, and as soon as kids were strong enough, taught them to work the field too. Is supported financially by 32 yr old single daughter (with child) who stays with her and once a week sells zitumbuwa in other vlg where there is more business (malonda), people gathering and buying. Daughter decides on expenditure. Daughter stays with mother “because unmarried.”

Ainessi (23, married) does not have own BS (nor husband - who used to buy zitenje, exchange these for chicken and then sell the chicken when still in Mangochi) “because they need all their ganyu money to buy ndiwo, which is difficult to get here in Mudzi B.” Husband had sold all his chicken to pay for the families’ transport from Mangochi district to Mudzi B (where her mother Rosemary moved to).

Dora (42, single, 2 marriages - mother of Dorica) met first husband in Balaka where she sold veggies, he clothes. He told her: “I am divorced, looking for wife now, can you manage?” Why her? Bcoz of God… Refused for 2 months, he kept coming to her house with soap, ndiwo, clothes, salt, saying “I love you therefore bring you this.” She was doubtful but after two months decided to agree. After a while however, he started to look for other wives, wanted 2 or 3, so she sent him away: “Then it becomes difficult to get enough salt, clothes etc, because you have to share everything with the other women.” Single with one child, managed by farming alone, growing crops for sale (maize, nandolo, khobwe) + kuoda bananas, suger cane.

Venesi (36, 2 ended marriages) felt she was the husband, providing for family through BSs started with loans from Concern Universal. Concern Universal asked chief for people from vlg who were free to get loan, in groups of 10 (4 men, 6 women). Went to 3 day seminar to learn about running a BS, could afterwards borrow 5000MK max, which she did. Had to start repaying after 2 months – £775 MK. Whenever she was unable to pay back, she borrowed from others for this. Bought fish at lake and maize in vlg, in June. Then took a new loan of 7000MK, for trading beans. Then another 5000MK loan to trade chicken.
Then a 200MK loan for tomatoes (repaying 310 every 2 weeks, in total 480 MN interest = almost 25%). The businesses she does depend on the season, in cotton season will sell more. Chooses to take new loans all the time (ondanks high interest rates) because it is difficult to gather such amounts by saving: someone gets ill etc. Proudly says that she decided on expenditure since her BSs, while before it was husband. Recently divorced him: Better to be alone than having to take care of him. Says she would also have divorced him without her BS, “could do ganyu.” In Mudzi A Concern Universal started the same microcredit scheme, but there it stopped when some men used the money to buy beer, couldn’t repay, led to quarrels in group. When I ask her about development projects she participates in, she does not mention the Concern loan. When I point this out to her, she says she indeed does not consider these loans a project, she makes proper BS, no charity!

Nola (55, 3th marriage)’s first husband was AEDO, proposed when she was still with parents. She told parents who said: Decide yourself whether you like him. She liked him, and hoped he would help her with her problems: work in the field, have enough clothes. Mother couldn’t provide enough clothes for her. He gave soap, clothes while in relationship, which gave her idea he would provide for her as husband. Married after 1 month, she followed him to his house. Provided indeed, but started having several wives, which made her decide to move back to parents and farm with them. Bcoz it became difficult to get all the things she needed, most things went to the other wives. He copied the behavior of friends, moving around, having multiple wives... She tried to advice him, he promised he would still provide as always, but it was different. She had 2 children to take care of, responsibility, so left him. Managed alone with 2 kids through BS zigumu & zitumbuwa at [large commercial estate] (started with money from selling maize). Was proposed by plumber working at [large commercial estate]. Tolf him to first meet her parents, which he did, all then agreed. She hoped he could help her supplement the income she got from BS. But started to drink, and got wife elsewhere. One day just didn’t come back to her after work, went to live with other wife without saying goodbye. Didn’t divorce him herself, hoping he would change. Continued her BS. A man sent his brother to propose for him. By the n she had lost parents and decided it was better to get married. Is a very good husband: doesn’t drink beer, work in field together, is not mistreating her kids. Have been together 11 years now, no kids. Also sold fish, but transport too expensive these days, reducing profits to much. Now only zigumu & zitumbuwa from house.

Nola decided to leave first husband when he started to have several wives. Although he promised he would still be providing her and their 2 kids, things changed, most items went to others. She had the responsibility of taking care of kids, so couldn't accept this. Started selling zigumu and zitumbuwa at [large commercial estate] to find own income. Found money to start trough selling maize.

Nyamwale (app 50, 1st marriage) sold zigumu at one point in her life. Started because of problems, borrowed money from her brother, but stopped within a year because she had no money to continue. husband provides income by making mats, and ganyu. Decide on expenditure together.

Olivia (32, 1st marriage) was proposed by a carpenter on the road when buying&selling bananas at Balaka, saying: Ndikukufunani banja. Was staying with mother at that time. First refused for 3 months, finding out about his behavior. Decided to accept
proposal after she was told by his friends that he is a good boy because “other men they go around proposing several wives, but not this boy”. He gave her soap, ndiwo, clothes without her begging for it. “I was now free to marry him, because of these gifts.” Still providing everything, hence is good husband. He is building her a shop now in Balaka to sell soap, salt, rice, sugar, biscuits. She is happy about this because it will allow her to find the things she wants but can't ask her husband → money. Will share income with husband - he will supply the shop, she will work in it. Now live in very small house.

- Katiya (20, 1st marriage) has never had a BS, because before she married she lived with parents who provided for her (did do ganyu though at that time, that's where she met husband). HH finds money through ganyu, mostly husband. Would maybe want to sell mandasi, just to find money. Some women do ganyu, others do BS, depending on their problems.

- Malita (62, divorced 2x) brews masese beer. Started 4 yrs ago when her deceased mother told her in a dream to start because it is difficult to find what you need if you just stay. Mother had taught Malita's elder sister, and told Malita in that dream to go to this sister and learn. Uses maize from own nkholwe. Now doesn't lack soap, salt anymore, easy to go to maize mill. Oct to Dec are best BS months, because people come to fill their stomachs with masese. Stopped [beer BS] when her daughter in Blantyre died, now waiting for ceremony after which she can start again (just like Charity whose child died and now waits for the ceremony before going to church again. Parents Muslim, but husband Seventh Day Adventist, changed religion for him). Will buy fertilizer when she receives money from Orphan Care. Begged to be registered for MASAF project, but GVH did not register her.

- Fissa (45-50, widow+divorced) has been selling zitumbuwa at [nearby primary] school for 2 years, but stopped last Aug, using all money to buy food.

- Amila (36, 2nd marriage) was one of the women who received a loan from Concern Universal. However, she used it to buy fertilizer, paid back through ganyu & kuoda cassava. Stopped kuoda cassava in June 2007, because buying was very far.

- Molly (27, 2nd marriage, child before ever married) selling tomatoes at 'grocery' beginning of Nov. Tinenenji selling groundnuts there. She had bought them.

- Yona (mother of Victoria, 70, widow) married at 17 with boy in school. Met when both in St3. He said “ndikukufunani banja” but she refused because wanted to continue school. Then man said she could continue school while he got prepared for marriage, then she agreed. Stayed 2 yrs in chibwenzi while he tried to get employed. After those 2 years he joined his father in Bulawayo (mother at Chiradzulo with kids) where he found employment at the railway company and called her to join him, which she did. There he proposed to other women too and when Yona once met them on the road she started fighting. The police came and put her in prison for 6 months. Then uncle came to pick her and kids back to Chiradzulo. Yona then started BS of selling thobwa & zitumbuwa. Uncle gave her money to start. Decided to stop BS when she married second husband. Later also did fish BS, but stopped now because of high
transport costs. Bought clothes, ndiwo, soap, pig, school fees with profit. Last yr her daughter did MASAF to buy her fertilizer. Hired ganyu in kupalira (January) after selling a goat, paying 1000MK. When their maize finishes (1 bag left on Oct 10) will eat phala in morning, skip lunch, nsima for dinner. Has a bike that is used by grandson to go to school which Yona bought with the money she received from Limbe Company when husband died.

Lizzie (19, married, husband in SA) met husband at a chinamwali ceremony. He said “ndikukufunani banja”, but added that he would marry her after 1 yr, to get prepared first. She agreed. During that year he brought her money from his clothes BS. With the money she bought soap, clothes, salt, ndiwo. Married indeed after 1 yr, in Feb 2008. After a month of marriage he left for SA. She knew about this, and was happy about it, is a good thing that he will be there, sending support. Sleeps with some small boys in the house because afraid alone, and eats with younger mother in next house. husband told her to stop school in Form 3. Now that he is in SA she tries to convince him to allow her to go back to school, but he refuses, saying that she wants to find another husband there, jealous... Did fish BS for a while, buying at Liwonde, selling here, but stopped because no profits.

Alma (60?, single, 3x married) has been alone for over 20 years, she says. Managing fine on her own, working hard on field, doing better than some of the married couples. Some of those lack salt, while she does not. Has 1.5 acre, and harvested a full nkhokwe of local maize this year (had two fertilizer coupons, one from daughter) and 3 bags of groundnuts. Sells maize and groundnuts. When we went to buy some Chalimbana groundnuts from her she said they were her husband - through them she can find the things she needs. This year got one coupon, sold maize and groundnuts to pay, but daughter borrowed money and hasn’t paid back yet. Will apply manure in top of ridges before the rains fall when she does not have enough fertilizer.

Gender roles

Charity (20, pregnant & divorced): Had her independent income selling tomatoes, masamba and green maize with which she “bought salt when her husband was not around to take care of her”

Chatting on veranda, some young men and women, one of whom is pregnant. Man asks her how come her men tend to disappear after impregnating her, is second time now… She avoids answering, saying he should come to her house and ask her in private if he really wants to know. The guys joke around saying that maybe both men will come back with cellphones for her, and a bike. “I can take care of myself” the woman answers back, “if I want something I will buy it myself!”
Mrs Ntawanga (46, married) choose to divorce her first husband because “amakonda akazi”, 3 yrs ago the man died. Then Mr Ntawanga proposed and she accepted. No! Had not been friend before. She knew he would be a good husband because she had seen him be loving with his previous wife (who he divorced because she was too talkative).

Hamra (56, married) choose to divorce first husband when he wanted to take her and their kids to his home village, “would be difficult to take care of kids and his parents…” Was then left behind with 7 kids! (did ganyu to feed them).

In past families would stay together in peace, big families: children, parents, grandparents. Mothers and grandmothers could thus advice young girls. Now there is much more quarreling, people only take care of themselves, live separated. Girls act as they please, do not behave well.

[Why do men in general have more money than women?] Some boys do ganyu to find money, others grow cotton, some even steal from parents or beg from their uncles and cousins. Girls have less money than boys because they are lazy and rude (mwano), don’t listen to parents advice.

Saibi (25, divorced & with baby from other man): Father (Catholic Ngoni) of last child just passed by and so came to know each other. He comes every now and then, but lives elsewhere with other wife. He doesn’t want to get married with her yet, but she does because “amalima…” Other wife knows about her and baby, Selina went to his vlgl, wife saw her, but didn’t do anything. Has her own (small) income from buying and selling tomatoes & masamba.

Chikondi (28, second marriage) divorced first husband because of “nkhanza” - physical mistreatment. He drank a lot, and fought with her when coming home drunk. When he didn’t drink, they were ok though. After separation husband went back to home in Machinga and Chikondi faced suspicious fellow village women who blamed her for receiving their husbands in her house. At the borehole women warned each other not to talk to her, for she would take your husband. These things happened a lot, Chikondi says. That’s why she agreed to marry her second husband when he proposed to her at market where she was selling veggies. At the very same day they first met, he proposed and she accepted. However, she didn’t know he would only show up every evening to eat and sleep, and during day head back for his home village… He sometimes brings her ndiwo or soap.

[What made you think he would be a good husband for you?] Men give gifts to show they are serious about marrying her. [What gifts did he give you?] Ah, just the gift of love - which was apparently good enough for her. Hoped this one would stay with her for a long time. Went to complain, to him and his parents. These say they have failed to talk to him, she should just leave him at peace, shouldn’t bother him, let him be, wait for him to divorce you.” Indeed, she too feels she can’t/doesn’t want to divorce him: “He should be the one to decide to divorce.”
In First field update about Chikondi: One woman (not a business woman, by the way) told us how she had married a man a few months ago, at the very same day they had met and he had proposed to her. The man disappears during the day to his home village, only shows up in the evening to eat and sleep. He does not support her and her children in any substantial way - maybe sometimes brings a soap or some relish to eat with nsima, the thick maize porridge that is Malawi’s staple food. When I asked her why she had married this guy in the first place then, she explained that other women had stopped talking to her at the borehole after she was left by her first husband, because they suspected her of receiving their husbands in her house. This was the only way for her to stop these gossips. She now has an extra mouth to feed, but at least is accepted again by her fellow village women.

- Aisha (28, left behind) ‘s husband (Islamic Yao) married other wife in Feb 2007 and since then divided his time between his two wives in different villages. But since some months hasn’t come at all anymore. Last season did send someone to help Aisha cultivate her field. When she is in need of things like soap or ndiwo, she sends one of her kids to his father and ask for it. But sometimes ex-husband has no money to buy. Never gives money, always the items asked for.

- Balakasi (51, divorced) recently sent her second husband away after 28 yrs of marriage because “samalima” [he didn’t farm]. Lazy man, just told him: I cannot live with you anymore.” [Gertrude thinks this coincided with her son going to SA and sending support]

- Nosalt (29, married) is the one who decides on expenditure, because husband did not even buy blankets for her when they got married! So he clearly doesn’t know what is needed in the HH…

- Sandala (28, married) started making & selling mandasi last August, to help HH, difficult to depend on husband alone, she decided. Before husband used to decide on expenditure, now she, because it is her business. By she decided to use her mandasi money to buy radio.

- Belita (46, second marriage) had own income (kachasu), yet still wanted to remarry, for example to build her a house, can’t do that herself… Sometimes he goes to find firewood to sell: they help each other in the family. [But getting married also leads to more mouths to feed?] Still better to be together to be able to help each other… She says she decides on spending, but Radio and bike purchase both decided by husband…

- Meriam (56, married) was in school together with future husband & lived near each other in village. After long courtship decided he was good man, because of “chikalidwe” = behavior: escorting her to hospital, gave presents like soap & lotion. Now, however, he married another wife besides her, and spends HH money on beer (e.g. last year she was ill during MASAF project and therefore wasn’t able to buy fertilizer - hence he doesn’t work for such money). Nonetheless stays with him: Because of children, growing
old herself, will not be given respect…

- Melina (44, first marriage) was proposed in 1983 by fellow school student. Married because of love from then up till now = “never abusive behavior”…

- Alinafe (46, widow) says her husband was good --> not abusive, providing what she needed, also helped her relatives as he helped his own (soap, money). After he died she did not want to marry again because “ndili ndi anje wamuna wina sadzalola kusungu ana anga.” - another man will not allow her to take care of her kids, will have to send them away. Gertrude's mother also did not remarry because of kids, Gertrude says. Some men propose to the daughters of their wife, wanting to sleep with them as they are not his children anyway - afraid of that.

- Nelia, aunt and niece later explained to me - asking why Nelia agreed to marry to a man at Balaka market she had never seen before - that women feel they need to hurry (chunga) to accept a proposal, in order to not lose this opportunity, before he proposes someone else.

- Nymwale (app 50, 1st marriage) says she has good husband = she gave birth to 5 children without him marrying another wife, they also work on the field together, he is even the one who does the ganyu [besides making mats for income].

- Olivia (32, 1st marriage) decided to accept proposal after she went around asking about his behavior and was told by his friends that he is a good boy because “other men they go around proposing several wives, but not this boy”. He gave her soap, ndiwo, clothes. “I was now free to marry him, because of these gifts.” Still providing everything, hence is good husband.

- Rebecca (18, 1st marriage) came back from maize mill when boy “amati akufuna chibwenzi ndiye ndinakana because afraid to get pregnant. Then he suggested to talk to her parents which she accepted. Came after wk and then she agreed. Stayed 1 month before marriage because he wanted time to prepare first = getting enough money (has clothes & fish BS). In that month he gave her soap, salt, clothes, lotion and ndiwo. Is good husband, still providing (even have iron sheet house! - not, is Esnart's). Viola stopped school in St 6 because the man proposed marriage.

- Sweetness (35, 2nd marriage) lived with parents when man came: Ndikukufunani chibwenzi. She agreed and in coming 2 months asked around about his behavior. Friends said he's good because he works in the field and doesn't drink beer. Those 2 months he brought soap, salt, money (which he found through ganyu) - she didn't beg, he just gave.
Divorced after 2 yrs because she found he was drinking beer...

- Mwayi (30, widow) came back from working at [large commercial estate] when man asked her “Ndikukufunani banja.” I agreed, then he wanted to wait 2 months so that he could get prepared, find enough money. In those 2 months he bought soap, lotion. Was good husband because provided everything until he died in 2005.

- Elube (45, 2nd marriage) got married very young because of “mavuto”: her father had died and when a man came to ask for her her mother allowed. They survived through ganyu. However, 2 days after giving birth to first child, he left to Lilongwe and never even sent soap, so she decided to end the marriage (he has some to see his child, but never brought anything). Moved back with mother and stayed alone 2 yrs. Second husband moved around looking for wife, met each other in street where he proposed about 30 yrs ago. Because of her problems she decided to agree. Asked her whether married, she answered marriage ended, then asked if she had kids, one, he agreed to take care. He was the first to propose after first one left. She had been waiting for someone to propose marriage to her. Was begging soap from her mother, wanted to marry to find soap on her own. But is not good husband, she has to do ganyu to buy clothes for kids, mat etc. He just plays cards, and when he wins uses money for himself (e.g. matemba - dried fish for own snack + maybe 10 MK salt for HH). Has zibwenzi, she heard from others and even himself. Told him to go back to his home vlg, afraid of diseases, but he refuses, saying he gave up trying to have several wives. But she can't be sure, because often he comes home late... She continues to feed him because of chisoni - his mother died so he has no other place to eat.

- Madalitso (45-50, almost divorced 2x) met first husband working a field here in Mudzi B. She thought he'd make a good husband since he was working in the field. After 3 yrs working in field together he wanted to work somewhere else, just disappeared and never returned. She stayed alone for 4 yrs with 3 kids - difficult to manage, did ganyu. Met 2nd husband doing ganyu together. Chatted and found both were unmarried and decided to marry. Again thought he is good, as he was working in the field at that moment. But after about a yr he started drinking beer day in day out, morning to evening. Hoped he would change, advised him to change, to no avail. She now decided to end the marriage, informed ankhoswe, waiting for them to return. Advantage of being married to this man: He helped her build the house, helped pay for new grass roof recently. They do ganyu together, but he uses his share mainly for beer. Couldn't explain why she continues to feed him. Said she only found money through ganyu, but when we came to give her picture, she had gone to Mangochi to buy fish for BS!

- Lovely (29, 1st marriage) married at 13 when she and husband were both employed at a farm (contract). She knew the guy from vlg, he 5 yrs older. After receiving their salaries, he would give her some as she earned less. Soon her first child was born (possibly married because pregnant thus...). husband left May 2007 to SA, hasn't seen him since,
but they talk 3x/wk over phone (which she owns, charges at [nearest trading center]). He
sends her items (screen, phone chargers) and money via others who come back from there
to here. He went because of “umphawi” [poverty], following younger brother. With
money he sends, she can hire ganyu. Will be able to eat till March from harvest, but is
cooking with smaller pots already. Before husband left they did not have enough food.

- Jeneti (37, left) was happily married, tried to develop/progress as a team. However, 5 of her 6
  kids died within a few months after birth. People started telling husband he should get other
  wife. Parents at one time asked him to come over and then showed him the new wife they
  selected for him, he accepted. A yr later a bike taxi man proposed to her, she explained him
  about her child bearing problem, he didn’t mind, she accepted to get help in taking care of 1 kids.
  He had wife in Ulongwe, but quarreled a lot, wanted divorce and needed someone to go to -
  didn’t want to move back to mothers... He took well care of her and kid, but started disappearing
  when she feel ill, sometimes stayed away for 3 months before coming back. People told her he is
  proposing to others. He even took maize from her one day, saying he was going to cultivate his
  mother’s field, then ate it with another woman. April 2007 last time he came, now she has
  ended the marriage. This yr [Jeneti] bought 20 irons sheets, partly with cotton money, partly from
  selling maize (has 3 acres). Next yr will be able to pay for putting sheets up (trees, nails, labor etc).
  --> Often ill, she says, and has sores on skin...

- When husband of Blessings (28, 1st marriage) left for SA he arranged her brother to stay
  with his wife and kids. Blessings decided on expenditure, as she is “the owner of the
  family/kids”. She joined him in SA for 2 yrs (cooking, washing etc in HH), wants to go
  back as it makes her proud to work in SA. Returned when she found herself pregnant, but
  will return when this one is old enough to be left behind = 3 yrs (also left other kid at 3).

- Fissa (45-50, widow+divorced) was proposed by first husband because he heard she wanted
  to stop school as her parents couldn’t pay school fees anymore. She refused for 5 months,
  waiting whether her parents could find money for school fees, but they failed and she
  allowed. Heard from others he was good: not smoking, drinking, playing cards. Was
  indeed good husband: enough soap, not sleeping without food (through ganyu).

- Chisoni (20, 1st marriage - eating with mother-in-law as they cultivated MILs land together
  with son/husband, will move to own family as soon as stock has finished here...) was in
  relationship with husband for 6 yrs during primary school. He would visit her at her
  parents’ house, bring soap, lotion. She would make him rice and bring in a container. When
  she got to Form 1 and couldn’t afford school fees, stopped and married. Husband left for SA
  June 2008. Sent soap via others coming back. They are in regular contact over phone,
  encouraging each other to stay faithful, is afraid he may find other wife but trusts him too:
  okhulupirika (he is a faithful person). Says doing ganyu is her biggest problem, because
  she is a woman. Women are used to work in HH, cleaning pots etc, men are more used to
  hard labor in the field...
Amila (36, 2nd marriage) has felt on top of her head, from carrying so much water, says Gertrude. She didn't get married until 25. Received proposals before, but was afraid to get gonorrhea which was prevalent at that time. But finally accepted proposal because of problems at home: lack of food & clothes. The parents of the men came to look for a wife for son, choose her because she respected elderly: “ulemu kwa akulu”. Man 5 yrs older, built her a house near her parents. When several of her relatives were dying he got afraid and left. In the same yr another man from other vlg proposed to her. Her uncle & other relatives advised her to allow: “You have no one else to take care of you, best is to get married.” She went to ask in his vlg, was told “good man”. Indeed good man, gave her many children. [but also causes problems, starts to behave strange when the moon appears, misses his home vlg and often disappears to his home village until he is send back by others saying: Go, you are married!] She lives near some women who are relatively well off, because husband's in SA, but is not helped by them. Ashamed to beg for help, better to ask them for ganyu.

Tinenenji (21, 1st marriage) was proposed by boy from vlg where she went sometimes to visit friend. Had chatted, he proposed her there, she allowed because she liked him. “Problems” says grandmother who is present at interview and with whom Tinenenji stayed at time of proposal, “couldn’t dress herself.” Agogo didn’t know the boy but agreed with marriage too, was glad someone else would take care of granddaughter now, agogo says. He is good husband: buys clothes (kuveka), they eat nice food. She grows (at dimba) and sells tomatoes to buy soap, salt, chigayo, clothes, paraffin. She decides on expenditure of own income. husband buys tomatoes elsewhere at larger scale and sells them at Liwonde every day - his BS brings most money. Money used for same items as hers - decide together. But husband decided the purchase of bed, radio, bike. Some money is saved to buy food in coming months.

Gertrude: Possible reason why men generally have more money than women: can do more ganyu, can do harder labor; and are more serious at running BS.

- Josephine (52, 2nd marriage) decides on expenditure at home because she knows best what is lacking in the HH.

Marriage & prostitution comments...

Eveles (old, widow): “these days young girls like money too much, and will therefore not reach my age... [?] Men propose to them, give them some money to sleep with them and then they become infected with the disease [matenda]. Many people already died in mudzi a because of the disease: there are so many orphans these days...”
These days, 4 girls may be waiting for one boy with some money, just to find some money (maybe need some for school). Get pregnant and therefore don’t get far in school. The same goes for adults and even old people! Because muslims are used to having several wives - this was also the case in earlier days, but less (maybe 2 wives ipv 3 or 4).

“Most Yao don’t care for school, just wait to get married.”[Eveles]

Mrs Ntawanga (46, second marriage) stayed 13 yrs in first marriage, but chose to divorce because “amakonda akazi” - sleeping around. Man died 3 yrs ago. Then Mr Ntawanga proposed, from Mudzi B. She had already seen how loving he was with his previous wife before he divorced because she was too talkative. But fiercely denied to me they were friends before marrying.

Ms Ntawanga: “Some boys are from rich families, steal money from their parents and call a poor girl. Some men go for ganyu, hide the money from their wives so that they can get zibwenzi. Or single boys, still fed by mother, do MASAF project, and use the money they find on girls. Both poorer and richer girls may do this, the richer ones may see their poorer friends do this and want too. The girls may be too tired for ganyu, or have done ganyu with family and the money was taken for HH needs, or follow the example given by their mother’s behavior.”

Chatting on veranda, young girl passes, throwing up a 5MK coin. People sitting on veranda comment that she has been begging a boy for this money. Asked her where she was going with that money: to grocery. “Ah, you’re going to buy sweets, you begged money from that boy!”

Hamra (56, married): In past families would stay together in peace, big families: children, parents, grandparents. Mothers and grandmothers could thus advice young girls. Now there is much more quarreling, people only take care of themselves, live separated. Girls act as they please, do not behave well.

[Why do men in general have more money than women?] Some boys do ganyu to find money, others grow cotton, some even steal from parents or beg from their uncles and cousins. Girls have less money than boys because they are lazy and rude (mwano), don’t listen to parents advice.

[Hamra] Still works the field alone, does ganyu alone, looks for money alone. [Even though married again now?] Didn’t know this husband would be lazy... Only has an extra mouth to feed. “Cannot decide to divorce, only he can.” husband harvested 4,5 bags of maize from own field last year which he sold, kept the money for himself and now eats from her maize.

Ndimadandaula: I used to stay alone, work on field alone, do ganyu alone, difficult to find food. But it the same now that she is married...

Came to Mudzi A in 1955 with parents, looking for land. First got married in 1970, giving birth to 7 kids (4 died). She decided to divorce when he wanted to take the family to his home vlg to take care of his parents. She didn't feel like doing this, would be difficult, so decided to stay behind
with kids. Managed by going for ganyu to find food. Says it is just as hard now as then to take care of kids as single mother. Took care of ill mother and sister for 5 years too. Then got married to current husband 6 yrs ago. Now staying with him and her youngest son of 21 (in house next to theirs, now with wife Fellister). Didn’t go to school, only boys went, girls stayed at home.

[Hamra] Finds money by exchanging chicken for pots or money & selling traditional medicine. [Hamra] Says she received no fert coupon, GVH told her that there are not enough, she will receive maize seeds: “But what is use of maize seeds without fert?” she asks angrily. Is trying to get fields prepared for planting asap because by end Oct her maize will be finished and then she will need to go for ganyu. Has 6 goats which all came from FIDP (3th yr now)

- Talks in village about woman at [small crossroads market] market who was dressed in only a chitenje, opened it and screamed “Who will sleep with me for money??” We asked if she was known to be a mad woman, but women at borehole and girls on our veranda said no, husband moved to South Africa.

- Woman passed by house, girls & women at our veranda commented: “That one, she is going to sell tomatoes rather than taking care of her husband. And always goes to the same village to sell, where she is seen with a certain man…”

Nelia (20, married) met husband on Jan 25 2005 when she was selling lemonade at Balaka market. Within 2 months they married. In 2006 baby was born. When accepting the proposal she didn't know whether boy would be good husband: changu - girl has to hurry making decision, not to miss opportunity, or he may propose someone else. But admits she wouldn't have allowed this one if he were old or ugly. And add that she would also not have allowed a beer drinker or loud talker, because these cannot take well care of a family. She trusted this one would stay with her as he is also an orphan, just like her, both have no one else to go to, hence will stick together.

Chikondi (28, second marriage) met husband at 16 when she came back from selling veggies at market. Accepted right away (father had died so she had no one to pay her school costs anyway), but waited 1 yr before marrying: waiting for her parents to come back to vlg to approve. mother advised her not to accept any gifts from him, because maybe she would decide to continue school and they would have to pay back everything because he would be angry about having wasted his time. She decided to divorce first husband because of “nkhanza” - physical mistreatment. He drank a lot, and fought with her when coming home drunk. When he didn’t drink, they were ok though. After separation husband went back to home in Machinga and Chikondi faced suspicious fellow village women who blamed her for receiving their husbands in her house. At the borehole women warned each other not to talk to her, for she would take your husband. These things happened a lot, Chikondi says. That’s why she agreed to marry her second husband when he proposed to her at market where she was selling veggies. At the very same day they first met, he proposed and she accepted. However, she didn’t know he would only show up every evening to eat and sleep, and during day head back for his home village… He sometimes brings her ndiwo or soap. [What made you
think he would be a good husband for you?] Men give gifts to show they are serious about marrying her. [What gifts did he give you then?] Ah, just the gift of love - which was apparently good enough for her. Hoped this one would stay with her for a long time. Went to complain, to him and his parents. These say they have failed to talk to him, she should just leave him at peace, shouldn’t bother him, let him be, wait for him to divorce you.” Indeed, she too feels she can’t/doesn’t want to divorce him: “He should be the one to decide to divorce.” [Nov 2008: Is clearly pregnant & Chikondi’s husband stopped coming after she told him to work in the field].

In First Field Update about Chikondi: One woman (not a business woman, by the way) told us how she had married a man a few months ago, at the very same day they had met and he had proposed to her. The man disappears during the day to his home village, only shows up in the evening to eat and sleep. He does not support her and her children in any substantial way - maybe sometimes brings a soap or some relish to eat with nsima, the thick maize porridge that is Malawi’s staple food. When I asked her why she had married this guy in the first place then, she explained that other women had stopped talking to her at the borehole after she was left by her first husband, because they suspected her of receiving their husbands in her house. This was the only way for her to stop these gossips. She now has an extra mouth to feed, but at least is accepted again by her fellow village women.

Julia (26, 1st marriage of both) lived with mother when the girl she walked with asked her to marry her brother. First wanted to see him, then allowed, married after 1 week: Because he was looking for marriage & kusangalatsidwa (she was proud of him, he made her happy), chikondi. husband took her first to his vlg to harvest there, then moved back to her vlg, because in Yao tribe don't allow wife to follow husband: sitimapanga imenze...

But: In g’s notebook on May 14: Livia said that do you know that her [Julia] father-in-law is a traditional doctor? He was staying at the place where my mother built a house. she married to Moses then after giving birth to a first child they divorced I asked why? And she said I don’t know but after few months she married to another man and gave birth to 1 child. Later on they divorced and went back to Moses up to now.

Aisha (28, left behind) got pregnant while still in school. Left school and started BS of buying and selling veggies. Boyfriend didn't provide anything, so she didn't want to stay with him, stayed alone. While moving around with her veggies, man proposed to be zibwenzi. But she said: “Did that before, am done with that now.” He thought for a week, then answered that he didn't have a wife either, so he agreed to marry her. She didn't know whether this one would provide for her or not. He was poorer than boyfriend, but at least they worked in the field together and did ganyu together. Now he sell fish. In 2007 husband (Islamic Yao) married other wife and then divided his time between his two wives in different villages. But since some months hasn’t come at all anymore. Last season did send someone to help Aisha cultivate her field. When she is in need of things like soap or ndiwo, she sends one of her kids to his father to ask for it. But sometimes ex-husband has no money to buy. Never gives money, always the items asked for. In Oct a new house was
being built for her - by her ex-husband who does not want to be talked about as bad man, leaving her without anything. Had promised this to her while still married - with iron sheet roof! She [Aisha] plans to start BS, because (ex-)husband does not send her enough. By selling fish from the house (cannot move around with small children who need food). But not yet, first work on the field now [Oct 2008].

- Naima (21, 2nd marriage) divorced her first husband (married at 16) because he had several wives. After 1 yr [Naima] was approached by fellow villager who looked for wife for his brother. He knew her behavior: had 2 kids already, but was not doing prostitution, no kuyendayenda, worked hard on field, took care of kids. She told him she first wanted to see the man So when he visited, brother came to pick, but she still refused: not ready yet. The brother encouraged her, saying the man works hard like you. Which indeed he does. They quarrel sometimes, but then they discuss, and they always work together on the field. [see Gertrude’s notes for story on Doris coming to sit on man's lap and afterwards sending Esnart letter to invite for fight.] [Grace told Gertrude that Naima is currently with third husband after she walked by with her first ex].

- Balakasi (51, divorced) recently sent her second husband away after 28 yrs of marriage because “samalima” [he doesn’t farm]. Lazy man, just told him: I cannot live with you anymore.” First marriage ended after 2 yrs, he was a fisherman who decided to continue fishing ipv moving to Mudzi A to live with wife.

Follow up: Second husband from Mudzi B, was looking for an unmarried woman and came to her: “Ndikufuna banja” Came 4 times, she refused 3x: first wanted to find out about behavior. People told her his behavior was good. He brought her soap after she allowed. At first he indeed behaved as promised: providing everything. although usually not for kids from her earlier marriage who stayed with her mother nearby. Both him and her had 1 acre of land on which they worked together. However, he stopped working on the field for 3 years, and then left to Mangochi to marry there. Came back one day to take maize. When he came for second time to take maize, she told him never to show up again. Did come back however after he divorced, started staying together again. But when the rains started, again he didn't work on the field - hadn't changed. She told him: We have kids, what are they going to eat?? And sent him away. She heard from others he is now working as a gateman in Balaka.

- Suset (23, divorced & with baby of other father) brews & sells kachasu at her house. Met first boyfriend at a football match when still at school, she form 1, he form 3. He proposed chibwenzi, she allowed after 1 month. Delayed because she didn't know about his behavior. His friends then told her he is a good boy, saying “others drink, smoke, fight - but not him.” She trusted these friends because they were very close to him. In beginning indeed showed good behavior, but eventually married someone else. Then when she escorted her uncle to Balaka, a boy (5 yrs older) proposed marriage to her. “If you are serious, meet my relatives,” which he did. They married after 6 months because advised by relatives to take time to really see his behavior. Came twice per week. She would then cook for him, he brought clothes, soap, lotion without her begging for it. Seeing that he
brought her things made her think that he would provide also in marriage. Thus started to live together after 6 months, in 2001, no wedding ceremony (= party with many people and food, couldn't afford). Four years later he left her to marry someone else. Father second child said he wasn’t married and would marry her, but she later heard from a friend that her is married to another. Comes sometimes to see his child, but doesn’t support them. She asks for help, but he says he has nothing to give. His wife knows as Suset went to his vlg, wife saw but didn’t do anything.

Teleza (28, divorced) met husband in church (Jehovah’s Witness). Liked him because they were from same church, he was not talkative but quite, good appearance. Church prescribes 6 months of chibwenzi as period to find out what the other likes and dislikes. She asked him what food he likes and tried to cook that for him. “Campaign,” joke Gertrude and she. Bcoz they didn't quarrel, she believed he was a good one for her. She on her turn said that she likes “a man who goes to church”, which he tried to do. [We asked her this question about how she came to be in relationship with husband where grandmother Kima was sitting, left to Teleza's own veranda when she heard question, later saying laughing: “You wanted to ask me this in front of my grandmother!”] Decided to divorce after 6 yrs in 2004, because he was a lazy man, didn’t want to work in the field. Doesn’t want to get married again, better alone. Now doing everything freely, working on the field and running a BS are not difficult, can manage alone, better then with a lazy man...

Josephine (52, 2nd marriage) was proposed at 13 when still in Ntcheu by a man who was working on a field. Without knowing him she allowed because: Boys & girls should marry. They stayed well together, but after 3 years he just moved back to his home village, without quarreling oid, just left. Decided to marry again in 1975, after 3 yrs alone, to “help each other”. Man passed by house where she stayed with her parents and proposed, she agreed then informed parents who advised her to go to the ankhoswe to arrange. Was her first proposal after first husband had left her unannounced. She couldn’t know whether he would be a good husband, would have to find out when living together. Bible says: A woman should be with a husband, and a man should be with a wife. When not married, people may say a woman is a bitch [prostitute] or bargirl. Moved with him to Mudzi A who worked at ADMARC in Balaka. husband is not very good: whenever he finds money he spends it on beer. She married so they could help each other, but she is only one taking care of HH… Stays with him because “maybe he will change,” plus stayed together many years, difficult to divorce him now, will be difficult to find other husband because she has children of another man. But if I ask whether she would indeed want to remarry, she says no, because his behavior may be the same. When I ask what the advantages are of staying with this husband she says there are none, because she farms alone now, gets clothes alone. In future, she now says, she will leave him... Now doesn't have money to leave yet, for transport ed, plus already started working on (his) field.
Victoria (38, divorced): marriage ended because husband married to another. Were both singing at church choir, often walked together, were friends when he proposed. “When proposing men pretend to be good men…” E.g. when she asked for something like money for soap, he would give without problems. Only after some years did he start to change, staying away during night, so she knew there was another woman. Tries to talk to him, but didn’t change. Then one day in 2002, after 16 yrs of marriage, he just left… Last born child also from 2002. Managed through farming and selling some crops, and sometimes ganyu when in need of soap. Is not looking for a new husband now, afraid of same behavior. [NB is building a new house with iron sheets! Says she doesn’t receive anything for 4 days/wk 3 hours teaching at Concern Universal adult school, but Venesi says they receive 1000MK/month]. Thieves stole about 2 bags of her [Victoria] cotton from the field.

Ganizani (21, never married, 2 kids) says she will marry the father of her last child (born 2006) when he finishes his secondary education, is now in his last year. Visits her now, brings soap and clothes without her begging. Her oldest child (2002) stays with younger sister of mother in Blantyre, where she was born.

Sandala (28, 1st marriage) stayed with agogo when a man came to propose her at 20 via agogo. Both agogo and herself were happy. She was just staying, stopped school after St 8 bcz lack of school fees. His behavior was good: respected parents, did not propose other girls. Is indeed a good husband. Started making & selling mandasi in Oct.

Maria (22, left behind) married in 2003 (“he was not abusive”), but when husband started to work as policeman in town (2006), he didn’t come back for her and their son. “Maybe because he has money and I am poor.” Never went to look for him, he never comes to see child. Wants to get married again in future, but is now still too hurt by her ex. Does receive proposals from other men, they just come to ask, bring no present oid, she declines, saying “Sindikufuna banja…”

Nosalt (29, married) was working on the road clearing project of MASAF when a man proposed to her. She did not agree msanga, took about a month, then decided she was ready for marriage (at 26). Had been proposed before, but because of head problems (going mad) had felt not ready. Had not been married before, so couldn’t know how to recognize a ‘good’ husband, would just see while being together. He is now in prison (“friends were thieves”, now 2nd of 9 months sentence)... She is the one who decided on expenditure because “he didn't even buy her blankets when they got married, still uses her old ones, Clearly doesn't know what is needed in HH...

Belita (46, 2nd marriage) met first husband at school, quickly found herself pregnant and therefore married, was childish... Decided to divorce her first husband (1979-86) because he had many zibwenzi (says she already knew about AIDS in those days and therefore wanted to divorce him). Found it difficult to stay alone, work the field alone, better to be with 1 than have several boyfriends. [Why? Several men may help more than one?]

Because may become infected with matenda… Then this man proposed (makes it sound as if it was very special favor, that one has to be lucky for this to happen, to come across a
man who is prepared to take care of her, and is serious about that), so allowed (another man had also proposed, brought her soap, but when she saw he had another family she refused). This one indeed better. Even though she had own income (kachasu), wanted to marry again, for example to build her a house, can’t do that herself… Sometimes he goes to find firewood to sell: they help each other in the family. [But getting married also leads to more mouths to feed?] Still better to be together to be able to help each other... Radio and bike purchase both decided by husband. Cotton money they shared, she bought clothes for kids and a pig. he says he maintained his bike with the money, but may have used it for beer. She believes this one is faithful, doesn't see him moving around, does go to drink beer but is always home before dark.

3910

Mery (74, widow) was married from app 1950 until app 1988, was good marriage. They met dancing in Lilongwe (Mganda dance, performed at wedding ceremonies), dated for a while before marrying. Didn't want to remarry, had been happy with husband, afraid of different behaving, disappointing husband. Was difficult, but managed alone: “kupilira” = carry difficulties alone.

3912

Meriam (56, married) was in school together with future husband & lived near each other in village. After long courtship decided he was good man, because of “chikalidwe” (toch?) = behavior: escorting her to hospital, gave presents like soap & lotion. Now, however, he married another wife besides her (since 2000), and spends HH money on beer (e.g. last year she was ill during MASAF project and therefore wasn’t able to buy fertilizer - hence he doesn’t work for such money). Nonetheless stays with him: Because of children, growing old herself, will not be given respect… Knew he had second family elsewhere because some nights he didn't sleep at home, and heard from others that he stayed at a certain house those nights. When she asked him he confirmed. This is what happens when a husband doesn't love his wife... She tried to advise him a bit, but eventually accepted the situation. Loves him, but it seems he doesn't love her, because he doesn't change his behavior. When a man has only 1 wife, he loves her full hearted. But when he takes a second wife, he shares his love. BV yesterday he just left even though she is ill. The maize from his field is for Meriam and kids, but husband does also work on the field of the other woman.

3914

Zara (28, second marriage) got pregnant at 14 by fellow student. Loved him (chikondi), after impregnation parents told them to get married. But soon he started to abuse her (amandizunza = oppressed/maltreated me/was cruel to me). She then took all her clothes and kitchen ware and left for her mother’s place who took her in. Lived with parents 3 years, who helped her to take care of child. Later saw it’s good to get married again. Advantages: husband helps her, when something lacks in HH he provides or they go for ganyu together. This man was looking around for wife, for unmarried girl. Was showed to
her house. When he came he had already heard everything about her. She did not agree right away, first came to Mudzi A, asked around, people said “good man”. Didn’t mind taking care of kids of other man. End Sept 2008 he left for SA, had discussed this together, she is happy about it, because he will send help.

- Serena (57, married) started her business in 1982, first sold chigumu, but saw everybody at market selling chigumu and therefore switched to kanyenya: small dried fish in a layer of fried batter. Decides herself on expenditure as husband is away working in Mwanza, but for large expenses like bike (after cotton sale), she called husband to discuss (ask advice?). Decided to start BS because husband had no work, they faced problems in their HH, her idea. When asked about impact of BS on relationship with husband, says defensively that are still well together. husband had told his friend/relative that he was looking for a wife, and that one brought them together. Through God she knew that this one would be good.

- Ellia (23, left behind) was in 2002 proposed by a man at the market in Balaka where she sold firewood. He asked her where she lived and came to see her in Mudzi A, proposed again. Her parents said she should decide herself, but it is better to marry than become pregnant. Didn’t know whether he would be a good man, or leave after impregnating, as he did… Just departed when she was 7 months pregnant (2005), without saying anything, never sends support or comes to see his son. When still together she was one to decide on expenditure because whenever husband found some money he would give her some and then disappear with rest to his home village. When she confronted him with this he would say: Don’t ask, you can move around too if you want.” (kuyendayenda). Has not had any proposals since and prefers to stay alone anyway: afraid, may get married, get another baby and be left again. It is dangerous nowadays… [Why?] Matenda Edzi. After forgetting what has happened, she may marry again. But to prevent Edzi it is better to do ganyu than to fall in love with boys. - When we come by in Oct for follow up questions and give picture her mother Viola tells us she has gone back to her husband to beg for assistance and has not returned, so maybe they are back together. Often comes after having been in a fight with him, and then goes back to him after a while. Her father went to him, after which his son-in-law said he would come to Mudzi A to explain everything.

- Filimona (22, 1st marriage) (husband = son of Hamra) came from Mudzi A to her vlg selling tomatoes and asked someone where he could find an unmarried girl. The someone was a friend of Filimona and told him to ask for her. Stayed in relationship for 1 month before marriage. Was first proposal. Says she got married in 2002, had 2 children in 2004 and 2008. Chisoni later says these 2 children are not from her current husband though... Also other knitting women commented on her another day, that besides the 2 children she has now, 2 more died. “Marriable girls must be difficult to come by these days,” they joked sarcastically, “since husband had to chose for this one who has already given birth to 4 kids.” Her husband decided on expenditure because “anzeru”: he has
more wisdom. Said in interview she has no independent income, but sells tomatoes that she grows at dimba field where she comes from. Stays with husband and baby, other child stays with her grandmother, after probing says this is because her mother had said: It’s your first time to go live there with husband/at his vlg, you don’t know how people behave there.”

Joyce (24) met husband at school when she was in Form1 and he Form3, were in relationship for 2 yrs before marriage because she was pregnant (left school). She knew he would be a good husband, because he was loving her. Moved with husband to Lilongwe, but quarreled a lot. She says in interview that they divorced because her husband married another. Stayed alone for 8 months: “Was easy to stay alone, because I did ganyu (fetching water for making bricks) and bought whatever I wanted at that time, eg clothes. As of now husband buys for me, but not enough.” Met at church, he proposed in May 2008, married month later. Both men have the same behavior though, as this one has also been married before. “Both are not loving me as I wanted. Am still young, but already in second marriage. Maybe this one will leave me to and then I will have to find a third husband, is not good for me.” On way to church together, Joyce tells Gertrude that her ex and his new wife stay very well, even have a screen and big radio, staying in Kanengo, working at Water Board. They met the ex on the road that day - he had come to collect money for a screen he sold here. He asked Joyce to come back to him because he has no one to cook for him, saying that people have been cheating her, that he doesn't have another wife. By now she was with another man though, having stayed alone for 8 months (married again “to be respected by people...”). So she said: You should come to my parents’ house to discuss this, if people see me talking to you while I am married to another now... When we went back to her for some follow up questions, we were told she had moved back to Lilongwe. About her 'biggest problem' she said, “Ndimapeza amuna osafuna banja” --> I have the tendency to find men who are not serious about having a family (both having left their wives to marry others). Her second husband is preacher at Seventh Day Adventist church, and during mass told his followers that his wife had left him, that he is looking for a new one and all interested unmarried girls/women should come to him.

Alinafe (46, widow) was proposed by husband at shop where she was buying soap. He went to meet her parents, who agreed. Says her husband was good --> not abusive, providing what she needed, also helped her relatives as he helped his own (soap, money). After he died she did not want to marry again because “ndili ndi ana ndiyedmwamuna wina sadzalola kusungu ana anga.” - another man will not allow her to take care of her kids, will have to send them away. Gertrude's mother also did not remarry because of kids, Gertrude says. Some men propose to the daughters of their wife, wanting to sleep with them as they are not his children anyway - afraid of that.

Bonny (28, 1st marriage, twin with Faith) met with husband at wedding ceremony in [small crossroads market] where he proposed to her, started relationship same day but got married after 4
months. Is good husband because they go to the field together - but when allowing a relationship she didn't know about this. [Nelia, aunt and niece later explained to me - asking why Nelia agreed to marry to a man at Balaka market she had never seen before - that women feel they need to hurry (chunga) to accept a proposal, in order to not lose this opportunity, before he proposes someone else.] Decide together on HH expenditure as they work together in the field to make the money. Eg radio, discussed together, to know what is happening in other villages.

- Rosebill (28, 1st marriage) met husband in school, had relationship 4 yrs. husband had had 2 wives before her already, she heard from others, but decided to marry him anyway. “I love him (chikondi) and will wait for him, even though he is now married to someone else, he will come back for me”... Gave birth to 2 of his children before they got married, one not long after getting married. Married in 2005, within a few days he went to drink and got into a fight. Police came and he was sentenced to prison where he has been for 3 years now. She uses her money to visit him in Ntcheu, give him food & money (but not all, also kept some cotton money to buy fertilizer later on, and bought soap, clothes, salt and sugar for own HH). Hired ganyu (ridges, Sept-Oct), paid through selling maize (cultivates 2 acres of herself and 1.5 of husband). Also sold nandolo, bought chitenje and food.

- Nyamwale (app 50, 1st marriage) was staying with parents when man came and said: ndikukufunani banja. She refused but he kept coming, then after a months she agreed. It was childish (chibwana) of her to refuse at first... Says she has good husband = she gave birth to 5 children without him marrying another wife, they also work on the field together, he is even the one who does the ganyu [besides making mats for income].

- Olivia (32, 1st marriage) was proposed by a carpenter on the road when buying&selling bananas at Balaka, saying: Ndikukufunani banja. Was staying with mother at that time. First refused for 3 months, finding out about his behavior. Decided to accept proposal after she was told by his friends that he is a good boy because “other men they go around proposing several wives, but not this boy”. He gave her soap, ndiwo, clothes without her begging for it. “I was now free to marry him, because of these gifts.” Still providing everything, hence is good husband. He decides on expenditure as he is the one who is working for it. He is building her a shop now in Balaka to sell soap, salt, rice, sugar, biscuits. She is happy about this because it will allow her to find the things she wants but can't ask her husband --> money. Will share income with husband - he will supply the shop, whe will work in it. Now live in very small house.

- Katiya (20, 1st marriage) met husband doing ganyu when he said he wanted to marry her. Refused for 1 month: Ndinafufuza kaye za khalidwa lake kwa amnzake [wanted to find out about his behaviour from friends]. His friends said: Samyendayenda [not moving around with many girls], osamenyana [not fighting], no beer. He did not bring her anything (later says that he did, but she did not accept them because she was not yet ready for marriage), but decided
to accept after hearing about his behavior. Still behaving good. They discuss together about expenditure (Timakambirana).

- Rebecca (18, 1st marriage, husband 21) came back from maize mill when boy “amati akufuna chibwenzi ndiye ndinakana because afraid to get pregnant. Then he suggested to talk to her parents which she accepted. Came after wk and then she agreed. Stayed 1 month before marriage because he wanted time to prepare first = getting enough money (has clothes & fish BS). In that month he gave her soap, salt, clothes, lotion and ndiwo. Is good husband, still providing. Rebecca stopped school in St 6 because the man proposed marriage. Discuss together on expenditure.

- Malita (62, divorced 2x) met first husband on way back from [nearest trading center] to buy ndiwo, he was selling fish. N dikukufunani banja... [I want marriage – man said] N dakana... [I refused]. Refused for a month because he came from far. Asked his friends who told me he is a good man because he doesn't have other wife. In that month he came to bring soap, salt, ndiwo. “Then when I saw those gifts I realized that ndi wabwino ndipo tinakwatisirana [it would be good if we married]. However, when children got ill she went to sing’anga who told her her husband was bewitching them, went home together where husband confessed. Hoping he'd change she stayed with him, but when all 8 children had died she divorced him. Stayed alone 10 yrs, finding whatever she wanted through farming & ganyu. Did receive proposals but was afraid they were not hard workers. Last yr a friend came to warn her that there is a certain man looking for a wife, she agreed without finding out about his behavior. Wanted to marry again because of umphawi, wanted a new house, but difficult to build alone. She decided to divorce after 5 months because he refused to come and stay with her. All her income comes from Orphan Care, 3000MK/month for 3 grandsons.

- Sweetness (35, 2nd marriage) lived with parents when man came: N dikukufunani chibwenzi. She agreed and in coming 2 months asked around about his behavior. Friends said he's good because he works in the field and doesn't drink beer (later says that her problems were so urgent that she didn't even asked or found out about his behavior). Those 2 months he brought soap, salt, money (which he found through ganyu) - she didn't beg, he just gave. Her parents had many daughters, difficult to take care of all, therefore decided to get married. Had received other proposals, but then wasn't ready yet, not her time yet. Divorced after 2 yrs because she found he was drinking beer... Then she decided to start mandasi BS. After 2 yrs another man proposed, banja ipv chibwenzi, but she refused so as to first find out about his behavior. After 2 wks he came to her house with his sister as witness who told her he is good, you will see - then agreed an up to now no problems.

- Mwayi (30, widow) came back from working at [large commercial estate] when man (6 yrs older) asked her “N dikukufunani banja.” I agreed because she had just stopped working at [large commercial estate] selecting tobacco. Then he wanted to wait 2 months so that he could get prepared, find enough money because he was staying with his parents, so had no HH utensils for
himself. In those 2 months he bought soap, lotion. Was good husband because provided everything until he died in 2005. Sees no reason to get married again, alone is good: grows different crops and after selling no one tells her what to use the money for, can decide herself. Disadvantage of being alone is that it will be difficult to make a new house.

Christina (34, 3x divorce) [looking ill, chifuwa every month...] was chatting with girl who told her brother was looking for wife, is working in Blantyre: “Are you going to like him? He will come nxt month...” Came indeed, saying “ndikukufunani banja”, she agreed (was just staying, had stopped school) and waited 2 months while he returned to Blantyre. During marriage provided everything. Divorced because he wanted to marry other wife, but she didn’t and decided to divorce. Had one child, after divorce she started working at [large commercial estate]. Met here with second husband who proposed chibwenzi, she just agreed (“kusowa kwa nyumba,” stayed with mother at that time, couldn’t make own house). Was giving me soap, salt, clothes & was loving me. Married after 4 months. At first he was still doing everything like pachibwenzi, but after 2 yrs started proposing other woman. In 1999 told her he was going to marry another, she said “I cannot manage to stay with man with 2 wives”, afraid of becoming enemies, quarrel a lot with other wife, so decided to divorce. Started working at Dwangwa Ilovo company to find money to feed kids. After parents died she went back to Mudzi B in 2004. Here a man said he wanted banja and she just agreed (mother had just died and people said it would be good for her to marry, to forget about being an orphan, to have someone to chat with). After week got married, didn't ask around about his behavior, but was good husband because provided everything. But now he has just disappeared without saying anything to propose to a woman in Mzuzu and meet her relatives. After cotton sale, husband used all the money for himself. This year received a coupon and already bought (beginning of Nov) with advance from ganyu she is doing now: clearing field & making ridges on less than 1 acre --> 1500MK, 800 advance for fertilizer.

Jasmine (56, 1st marriage): Man asked her parents for marriage when she was 7 yrs, married at 12 (“wochepa kwambiri” --> I was very young! Crying, running away...). Gave first birth several yrs later [how avoided? --> eventually took traditional medicine to become pregnant]. Parents allowed him to marry her because they knew he behaved well = not moving around. Came from other vlg, but was related to fam through grandmother. After first child, when husband couldn't sleep with her, he started to spend the days and nights at another woman's house (Jasmine followed him one day). When she discovered, went to ankhoswe after which the man stopped, leaving the other woman 6 months pregnant (child died). She says some men do this behavior because they have many children at home, are tired of that and go to a woman who has few kids; or his wife has grown old and he is curious to know the difference with a young woman.

Livia (21, divorced, 2 kids) had only one dress while she was in school, hence difficult to wash that dress, thought it better to get married and leave school (St 7). Was
staying with brother & fam in [nearby tradingcenter] at that time, brother provided for her but couldn't sufficiently (brother sold diesel and had decided to take her in to help her and parents, she helped his wife in HH). Met man at market, he asked where she stayed and whether he could go see her brother. Brother than told her about proposal, she said: “If he is serious, let's go to my parents.” Parents refused for 1 yr, girl should continue school. But man kept coming, continued to see each other. Did not sleep together, she says, because parents were against their union and brother was watching over her, therefore really did not want to get pregnant. Knew that sex can lead to pregnancy, heard from people. After 1 yr parents allowed, still advising her it's better to continue school first, but she wanted to marry. Husband than took her to Nkhata Bay, where they lived good life as he sold handicrafts at tourist market. After yr started quarreling, she left for home vlg several times but came back each time. Until he proposed to sell their 1.5 yr old daughter to find money. Fled to home vlg where quickly she was proposed by man from [nearest tradingcenter], she hoped a fellow villager could be a better match. Was difficult to take care of her child alone, wanted help, couldn't know if he was good. But later found he is married elsewhere, which he then confessed. Left her before she gave birth to his child, can't manage to take care of 2 families, is still young. But did promise to help her pay ganyu for her field this year. She employed them, they finished job (400MK kusosa, 600MK ridges), but he hasn't come with money yet - she flashed him several times, he still promises the money will come. Her ex came one day from Nkhata Bay to take her back with him, but found her pregnant from someone else... She is now making mandasi, which she has sold in vlg of sister-in-law, borrowed 2000MK to start + received 1000MK from parents. Ingredients app 500MK, profit 250/300 after 3 days selling. [But stopped again soon after, had spent money on food, nothing left for reinvestment...]
marriage to her. Was backing soap from her mother, wanted to marry to find soap on her own. But is not good husband, she has to do ganyu to buy clothes for kids, mat etc. He just plays cards, and when he wins uses money for himself (e.g. matemba - dried fish for own snack + maybe 10 MK salt for HH). Has zibwenzi [girlfriends], she heard from others and even himself. Told him to go back to his home vlg, afraid of diseases, but he refuses, saying he gave up trying to have several wives. But she can't be sure, because often he comes home late... She continues to feed him because of chisoni [pity] - his mother died so he has no other place to eat. Says she has 1 son in SA who went there in Feb this year (2008) but has not yet send support. He lived in Mangochi with wife. Lovely is daughter.

- Nelia: Both she & husband are orphans, have no one to run to, so trusts that they will stay together.

- Rosemary (in notes) - married 5x, brother wanted to sleep with her after sing'anga advised him this as way to become rich, now married to man she knew is a drinker. Chief Mudzi A had also proposed to her, which led Hamra to be angry with her. Now that she married another at least she and Hamra speak again...

- Madalitso (45-50, almost divorced 2x) met first husband working a field here in Mudzi B. She thought he'd make a good husband since he was working in the field. After 3 yrs working in field together he wanted to work somewhere else, just disappeared and never returned. She stayed alone for 4 yrs with 3 kids - difficult to manage, did ganyu. Met 2nd husband doing ganyu together. Chatted and found both were unmarried and decided to marry. Again thought he is good, as he was working in the field at that moment. But after about a yr he started drinking beer day in day out, morning to evening. Hoped he would change, advised him to change, to no avail. She now decided to end the marriage, informed ankhoswe, waiting for them to return. Advantage of being married to this man: He helped her build the house, helped pay for new grass roof recently. They do ganyu together, but he uses his share mainly for beer. Couldn't explain why she continues to feed him. Said she only found money through ganyu, but when we came to give her picture, she had gone to Mangochi to buy fish for BS!

- Lovely (29, 1st marriage) married at 13 when she and husband were both employed at a farm (contract). She knew the guy from vlg, he 5 yrs older. After receiving their salaries, he would give her some as she earned less. Soon her first child was born (possibly married because pregnant thus...). husband left May 2007 to SA, hasn't seen him since, but they talk 3x/wk over phone (which she owns, charges at [nearest tradingcenter]). He sends her items (screen, phone chargers) and money via others who come back from there to here. He went because of “umphawi” [poverty], following younger brother. With money he sends, she can hire ganyu. Will be able to eat till March from harvest, but is cooking with smaller pots already.
Before husband left they did not have enough food.

- Ayama (app 70, 2x abandoned) married first husband 'when her breasts were still small.' He asked her parents, who agreed, then she agreed too. Told her that she would find out whether he is good during marriage, no other way to know. He was also very young. After 3 kids together he went somewhere else to work and never came back. Therefore decided to follow her parent who moved from Dedza to Balaka, didn't want to stay alone. Stayed unmarried for about 12 years with parents who told she was still young, no need to remarried yet, can wait. She also preferred to take care of her children before remarrying. Second husband was related to GVH, gave her 5 kids, stayed together about 20 years, then he left to marry another wife about 10 yrs ago. now she is too old to remarry again. Survives by begging support from children in SA (1 sends clothes, the other one just left last March) and children in vlg (3). Has half an acre of land, from her second husband who ran away. Did small bits of ganyu to find small bits of money (50MK).

- Jeneti (37, left) was happily married (he came to propose from nearby vlg, she knew and liked him, she didn't want to be moving around so decided to accept, had seen him work hard on field, therefore thought he would be good husband, was first marriage for both), tried to develop/progress at a team. However, 5 of her 6 kids died within a few months after birth (Modesta is daughter who survived). People started telling husband he should get other wife. His parents at one time asked him to come over and then showed him the new wife they selected for him, he accepted. A yr later a bike taxi man proposed to her, she explained him about her child bearing problem, he didn't mind, she accepted to get help in taking care of her child. He had wife in Ulongwe, but quarreled a lot, wanted divorce and needed someone to go to - didn't want to move back to mother's... He took well care of her and kid, but started disappearing when she fell ill, sometimes stayed away for 3 months before coming back. People told her he is proposing to others. He even took maize from her one day, saying he was going to cultivate his mother's field, then ate it with another woman. April 2007 last time he came, now she has ended the marriage. Says: Men who do BS see women, tell them about their BS, say “I can take care of you”, copying the behavior of their friends of proposing like this to many women... This yr bought 20 irons sheets, partly with cotton money, partly from selling maize (has 3 acres). Next yr will be able to pay for putting sheets up (trees, nails, labor etc). --> Often ill, she says, and has sores on skin... Both did (kupalira, kubandira in Dec+Jan) and hired ganyu (paying with money, others with maize). Still has 5 bags of maize (end Sept), which could last her till next harvest if she not needed to sell some of it, e.g. to buy ndiwo. and pay daughter Modesta's secondary school fees. Has a bed and radio, both bought through selling maize. The bed was decided by husband in 2003, the radio she decided herself after husband took theirs.

- Tumanene (26, 2nd marriage) First marriage at 19, “to take care of each other.” Lasted 2 years, child was about a yr when she decided to leave him, had come to dislike him she says: nkhanza, talkative. Stayed alone 4 yrs, went to Lilongwe where parents/aunt/uncle were, and found job at a HH in area 47 via relative working at Escom, cooking & nanny.
Earned 4500MK/month, got soap and food where she stayed. Gave part of salary to mother who was taking care of child and kept some herself for clothes and savings. When she returned to Mudzi B (or other vlg in Balaka?) bought maize with this money. Stayed with her parents and worked the field until proposed in 2006. Allowed “to have enough.”

Mother supplied everything, but was a big family, better get married so mother can take better care of others. She didn't first ask around about his behavior, because: “people can cheat you, may not want you to marry him, only way is to find out yourself.” At this moment they are staying well together, no nkhanza, work on field together, but don't know about future... Since March husband to SA, sent money (3800MK) for first time last month (Aug), used to buy soap, clothes, sick child to hospital, money is finished now. They talk each weekend on phone of Lovely, but doesn't know what job he does. Will wait for new money, otherwise do ganyu, MIL helps too sometimes with ndiwo or soap. Hasn't been growing cotton because didn't see benefit, but now sees there is and will start. Comparing LL to vlg: in town have to buy everything, nkuni, ndiwo, maize, rent land. Definitely prefers to stay here in vlg.

When husband of Blessings (28, 1st marriage) left for SA he arranged her brother to stay with his wife and kids. Blessings decided on expenditure, as she is “the owner of the family/kids”. She joined him in SA for 2 yrs (cooking, washing etc in HH), wants to go back as it makes her proud to work in SA. Returned to Mudzi B when she found herself pregnant, but will return when this one is old enough to be left behind = 3 yrs (also left other kid at 3 - sending money to mother to take care of them). Blessings Got blood test second wk of Nov, she told friends at borehole, but didn’t mention result.

[Blessings] Met husband in primary school, were in relationship for 2 yrs, discussing that they would marry in the future. He sometimes bought her soap and lotion with money that he got from his parents, which he then brought to her parent's house where she stayed. Therefore she liked him, made her hope he'd be good husband, and indeed still is. She left school in Form 1 to marry (not pregnant, mother divorced father, no school fees & 'was just childish to stop'), he finished secondary. He born in Balaka town where they stayed until he left for SA in 2000, then she moved back to Mudzi B. Eats with mother, but sleeps in own house. He sends her money through bank account or with a traveler. When the money finishes she calls him for more. He works in shop in Capetown. Uses the money for things in HH: food, salt, soap, plates, blankets. husband told her to buy beds for the children. Bought screen, DVD player, typewriter, all to sell when husband returns. Hires ganyu, but also works herself in field. Also before husband left to SA they had enough food, because he worked in PTC in Balaka. Difference SA vs vlg: very different, here difficult to find food, also behavior is different: there girls with tight trousers and naked bellies; easier to get employed there; more Indians and azungu there, therefore more developed and richer. He was the one who decided she should come to SA as he sent money for passport and transport.

Fissa (45-50, widow+divorced) was proposed by first husband because he heard she wanted to stop school as her parents couldn't pay school fees anymore. She refused for 5 months, waiting whether her parents could find money for school fees, but they failed and she
allowed. Heard from others he was good: not smoking, drinking, playing cards. Was indeed good husband: enough soap, not sleeping without food (through ganyu). After giving birth to 6 children, husband died. Fissa stayed alone 5 yrs - timangokhala, just staying with kids. Second marriage from 1995-2007. Man came from Zambia and proposed, after 1 yr she allowed because “mavuto”, failing to take care of her 6 kids. Delayed allowing because she first wanted to see his behavior, he helped her with soap, salt, chigayo. They stayed in Zambia, but in 2000, after 2 kids, Fissa wanted to go back to Mudzi B where her 6 children from first marriage stayed. He still came to visit, but not bringing anything because she refused to stay with him. Last visit was Sept 2007... Has at least 2 sons in SA. One gave her bike. Does ganyu: kupalira + kukolola chimanga in Dec, Jan, Feb.

Chisoni (20, 1st marriage - eating with mother-in-law as they cultivated MILs land together with son/husband, will move to own family as soon as stock has finished here, is farming her field there now...) was in relationship with husband for 6 yrs during primary school. He would visit her at her parents' house, bring soap, lotion. She would make him rice and bring in a container. When she got to Form 1 and couldn't afford school fees, stopped and married. husband left for SA June 2008. Sent soap once via others coming back. They are in regular contact over phone, encouraging each other to stay faithful, is afraid he may find other wife but trusts him too: okhulupirika (he is a faithful person). When he comes back, they will hire ganyu with the money he brings. At time of interview she was doing ganyu, making ridges at own home vlg = K. village. Finds it tough though, because she is woman: women are weaker while men are strong. Women are used to working in the house, cleaning plates etc, men are more used to doing hard labor in the field.

Amila (36, 2nd marriage) has eelt on top of her head, from carrying so much water, says Gertrude. She didn't get married until 25. Received proposals before, but was afraid to get gonorrhea which was prevalent at that time. But finally accepted proposal because of problems at home: lack of food & clothes. The parents of the men came to look for a wife for son, choose her because she respected elderly: “ulemu kwa akulu”. Man 5 yrs older, built her a house near her parents. When several of her relatives were dying he got afraid and left. In the same yr another man from other vlg proposed to her. Her uncle & other relatives advised her to allow: “You have no one else to take care of you, best is to get married.” She went to ask in his vlg, was told “good man”. Indeed good man, gave her many children. [but also causes problems, starts to behave strange when the moon appears, misses his home vlg and often disappears to his home village until he is send back by others saying: Go, you are married!] She lives near some women who are relatively well off, because husband's in SA, but is not helped by them. Ashamed to beg for help, better to ask them for ganyu.

Kondwani (35, left - sister of chief Mudzi B) stayed alone when man came to propose her at 19. She allowed right away because it was her age to marry. Most of her friends were married, she was ashamed not to have been proposed yet. She knew man because from same vlg: kufatsa = meek, quiet, polite man. When he left for SA his mother wanted him to divorce, was jealous, afraid that only wife would benefit. husband agreed. Kkondwani made efforts
to change his mind, but to no avail. He returned, married someone else. Used to come to help her kids, but forgets these days. [Kondwani] Only one of her 4 kids go to school (1995-2003), decided so themselves.

- Salika (39, abandoned 2x - chief Mudzi B) was proposed by man from same vlg at her parents’ house (“Ndikukufunani banja”), she allowed (“Ndalola”) because kuvutika (lacking clothes, soap, food) --> “When a man proposes, it means he is ready to take care of you/serious about taking care of you.” Would find out about his behavior while married. He was tailor, they stayed in Blantyre, he decided on expenditure because he made money). After 4 yrs he married another(Anakwatira kwina), she then decided to end the marriage because he stopped helping her.

Was alone with 4 kids, struggled, doing ganyu, fetching water for bricks. A man proposed but she refused, afraid of same behavior. After 5 yrs, 2004, another came and this time she accepted. Not because this man was very different from earlier proposer, but just because she felt she should get married again. After 3 yrs (and 3 kids) however, left her (pregnant) to marry other...

Now doesn’t want another man: just brings more problems (more children and then being left again).

- Tinenenji (21, 1st marriage) was proposed by boy from vlg where she went sometimes to visit friend. Had chatted, he proposed her there, she allowed because she liked him. “Problems” says grandmother who is present at interview and with whom Tinenenji stayed at time of proposal, “couldn’t dress herself.” Agogo didn’t know the boy but agreed with marriage too, was glad someone else would take care of granddaughter now, agogo says. He is good husband: buys clothes (kuveka), they eat nice food. husband buys tomatoes somewhere and sells them at Liwonde every day, he brings in most of the money. He has field at dimba, where they grow tomatoes which she sells in vlg, also grow maize and masamba, pumpkins, they water together. Her husband was the one to decide to buy a bed, radio, bike. Has not been registered for coupon, “because chief did not invite her to meeting & was afraid to show up uninvited” she claims... And because she [Tinenenji] is angry over this, is not participating in tree project [but tree project started earlier, maybe other way around, or completely bodza].

- Thandizo (59, divorced, skinnier each time, sores on face) married at about 15 yrs old. The man proposed to her parents first, who asked her, she allowed because afraid of becoming pregnant by an unserious man (granddaughter Tinenenji laughs hard), better to get married. Dated 3 months, he had job somewhere, brought her sugar, biscuits, clothes. He left her after 22 yrs & 9 kids (5 died). She managed because strong, could work the field, and as soon as kids were strong enough, taught them to work the field too. Is supported financially by 32 yr old single daughter (with child) who stays with her and once a week sells zitumbuwa in other vlg (M.) where there is more business (malonda), people gathering and buying. Daughter decides on expenditure. Daughter stays with mother
“because unmarried.” [Thandizo] Says they only have maize to last until end of Oct (during interview on Sept 25), while daughter she shares house with says until end Dec (during interview beginning of Nov). Beginning of Nov I see her preparing seeds for planting, incl maize, sorghum, pumpkin. Didn’t mention last 2 in interview.

- Ainessi (23, married) met husband in school (he St7, she St2), met with ankhoswe and decided to marry, but not yet. She went to Blantyre to work 2 yrs cooking in HH, he finished school. She left job when woman suspected her from sleeping with man - because she got nicer clothes. Married when she returned. During relationship he brought her soap etc, which gave the impression he would also provide for her when in a family - which indeed he did. husband decided on expenditure because he is the akulu in the house. She was the one who decided to move to Mgwire, following mother, he followed. End Oct husband is found in bed with neighbour Emra; Jane complained that he proposed to have sex with her one day when she was bathing and later threatened to beat her for having refused. Led GVH to chase him from village. Ainessi followed him. He still comes back to sleep with Emra some nights.

- Emra (22, first marriage) met husband at 14 (he 20) when both were doing ganyu. Started relationship with him because: “kuvutika” - lacking clothes, food. Had lost her parents (children stayed alone taking care of themselves, were with many, relatives hesitated taking one in, fearing more would then follow) and hoped marriage would end her problems. Married right away, was first proposal. Has no child of 8, so probably not married because of pregnancy. Lost second child in Sept - just dropped dead like first one. End Oct husband left her, saying he wants a wife that bears children that stay alive. When he came back few nights later, found Emra sleeping with husband of Ainessi, tried to cut her ear but because she ran away slashed her head giving her now many problems carrying water... Emra claims she is not ashamed of being caught: “everybody knows about the business of sex, besides my husband had left me.” Ainessi angry, says husband cheated her saying he went to get some ndiwo, and Emra had been real friend, Ainessi had helped Emra make zigumu, Emra had come over to chat... But others say she has said she told husband to go and sleep with Esnart “to proof the rumors about the two of them having a relationship.”

- Valentine (24, first marriage): mother of husband was looking for wife for son and asked her because of her “good behavior respecting elders”. But Valentine didn’t agree right away, first wanted to see him. When he came, she didn’t ask any questions (he could be cheating her/lying, have to live together to really find out what someone is like), accepted right away: “Blood can be the same, make one attracted to the other.” After the agreement he brought her a blanket, chitenje, umbrella, lotion. She hadn’t asked for this, he just decided. He is a good husband, they agree with each other. E.g. when he wanted them to stay with his mother, she followed, and when she wanted to go back to Mudzi B, he followed. He decides about expenditure, as he is the eldest (3 yrs older), gives her money when she needs e.g. to
Hilda (50, first marriage) was proposed at 20 on her way to buy relish at Balaka market. The man asked her where she was from and then whether she wanted to marry him. She refused, saying: “I am still young…” When she went home he followed her and proposed again, after which she said: Well, ok, if you are serious, let’s stay together/we will stay together” and told him to go meet her parents. [When & why & how does such a man decide to propose?? How many do they generally propose before one agrees? What are they after???] Parents said: “If she allowed, we will help arrange ceremony, ankhoswe.” Then the ankhoswe met and discussed. He moved in house where she stayed alone (built by uncle who felt she was old enough to live alone with other sisters - at 22, but later build new house as told by ankhoswe. Only after 10 years did they get first child [!] - “because of god.” She is the one to decide on HHS expenditure, as het husband misuses money for beer (they couldn’t even buy fertilizer last yr). He started kuyendayenda 4 yrs ago, before that was good husband, used to go to field together. Tells him to go (because of mavuto: no blankets, no mat, no food), but he refuses, saying “I have stayed with you so many years, where can I go?” Ankhoswe say to her: “If you can’t even make him go, what can I do?” Didn’t go to school, but wants her children to be able to read, when traveling she can’t even read the buses destinations...

Grace (21, first marriage, with child from earlier lover; hair extensions) went to Mangochi to sell fish where she was proposed. Man has boats and men fishing for him. She said: If you are serious, you should follow me so I can know that you are serious.” And indeed he came after 1 week, talked to parents & chief, built her a house. She was just staying anyway (with agogo - iron sheets), had stopped school, better to get married. Has child from 2005, boyfriend cheated her saying he’d marry her. But she didn’t want, broke up while pregnant, because he refused going to the chief. People told her no one would help her if he would if he had not formally gone to the chief, she was afraid he may be married somewhere else. She liked this one because he did not propose to other girls. First says the proposal of her current husband was her first proposal, only later do we find out she has a child older than her marriage. Says current husband is good: buys clothes for her and food when there is no. He decides on expenditure as he brings in the money. He doesn’t want her to continue her fish BS. She begs him for money to start any kind of BS except for mandasi, but he says it’s not a good time yet. [prefers to keep her dependent?]. She would like to have her own income because husband sometimes leaves for a week without leaving enough money… husband hasn’t returned from lake since interview end Sept - half Nov now, while lake is closed for fishing this time of year... Grace had left for Mzuzu (where father of first child lives) to receive money from somebody (some say uncle, some boyfriend) to start BS with.
Dora (42, single, 2 marriages - mother of Dorica) met first husband in Balaka where she sold veggies, he clothes. He told her: “I am divorced, looking for wife now, can you manage?” Why her? Bcoz of God… Refused for 2 months, he kept coming to her house with soap, ndiwo, clothes, salt, saying “I love you therefore bring you this.” She was doubtful but after two months decided to agree. After a while however, he started to look for other wives, wanted 2 or 3, so she sent him away: “Then it becomes difficult to get enough salt, clothes etc, because you have to share everything with the other women.” Single with one child, managed by farming alone, growing crops for sale (maize, nandolo, khobwe) + kuoda bananas, suger cane. After 3 years alone wanted a husband to help her build a house. Man from D. vlg had seen her go to bafa and asked people whether she was married. Proposed her when she came back from washing, but she refused because didn’t know him, wanted to find out about behavior first. He started bringing soap, lotion, money for maizemill. Little later met again at a dance in a nearby village, where she accepted. He left last year to run BS in Mangochi (making tins, used to make mitondo in Mudzi B but not satisfied with income, first did same in Mangochi, later changed to tins - borrowed money for this, but never brought back, now people confiscated her goats), comes when he pleases, but less and less. Although he denies, she suspects he has another wife there now, because: “if even those from far away South Africa send money for their wives, and Mangochi is even much nearer by but he doesn’t.” She has no money for transport to check…

Venesi (36, 2 ended marriages)'s first husband from Mudzi B (where she moved at 8 yrs from Lilongwe, back to mother’s home vlg). Met in school, he proposed when she St 6, he St8. She allowed because she liked him: Tinakondana, because of “behavior”, was not talkative. Gave soap, money - sometimes she asked for it, sometimes he just gave. But her Catholic parents wouldn’t allow her to follow to his Islamic religion. Gave birth to 1 child. Parents helped her manage. After 2 yrs mother died and father married other, she used the bricks of mother’s house to built her own (brother built), is house she still lives in, grass roof. When a second man came to propose after few months in own house she allowed, it was difficult to find the things she needed, maybe through marriage she could get them. He was from same vlg, behaved well, loved the child. But now lazy, never does ganyu, says it’s better to invest time in own field, but she disagrees: need money, cash, food. Felt she was the husband, providing for family through BSs started with loans from Concern Universal. Proudly says that she decided on expenditure since her BSs, while before it was husband. Recently divorced him: Better to be alone than having to take care of him. Called ankhoswe, who heard both sides and advised him to come back sometimes to support his children, but she is skeptical about this: He even didn’t do that while he was still around... husband had objected to divorce at first, but she said: I told you many times to do ganyu, but you never did, and you will not change. To which he agreed, went back to Thyolo now. Says she would also have divorced him without her BS, “could do ganyu.”

Molly (27, 2nd marriage, child before ever married) met father of first child at school. She stopped school when she found herself pregnant in St7, he Form 3. She stayed
with her parents, and when he finished school, he married someone else... The following year a man came to Mudzi B to stay with relative and proposed to her. She explained she had a baby, he said he could manage to take care of them. Then she agreed, it was a secret from God whether he would be a good husband. But wasn’t: drank beer and beat her. She went to ankhoswe to complain, but he still didn’t change, so divorced. Had 1 child together. Never comes to see child or help. She stayed with parents again. Mother gave her money to start BS: went to Ntcheu to buy tomatoes and sold these in Mudzi B. Second husband came last year as cotton buyer for company, opened cotton growing clubs, brought seed and later came to buy the produce “contract farming”, temporary job. Told her he was looking for someone to marry. She said: “If you are serious, talk to my parents,” which he did. This one is better. Takes care, helps her. He decides on expenditure as he is the one who brings in money.

Nola (55, 3rd marriage)’s first husband was AEDO, proposed when she was still with parents. She told parents who said: Decide yourself whether you like him. She liked him, and hoped he would help her with her problems: work in the field, have enough clothes. Mother couldn’t provide enough clothes for her. He gave soap, clothes while in relationship, which gave her idea he would provide for her as husband. Married after 1 month, she followed him to his house. Provided indeed, but started having several wives, which made her decide to move back to parents and farm with them. Bcoz it became difficult to get all the things she needed, most things went to the other wives. He copied the behavior of friends, moving around, having multiple wives... She tried to advice him, he promised he would still provide as always, but it was different. She had 2 children to take care of, responsibility, so left him. Managed alone with 2 kids through BS zigumu & zitumbuwa at [large commercial estate] (started with money from selling maize). Was proposed by plumber working at [large commercial estate]. Told him to first meet her parents, which he did, all then agreed. She hoped he could help supplement the income she got from BS. But started to drink, and got wife elsewhere. Told him to stop drinking, because HH money was spent on beer ipv food. Meanwhile continued BS. One day just didn’t come back to her after work, went to life with other wife without saying goodbye. Didn’t divorce him herself, hoping he would change. Continued her BS. A man sent his brother to propose for him. By then she had lost parents and decided it was better to get married. Is a very good husband: doesn’t drink beer, work in field together, is not mistreating her kids. Have been together 11 years now, no kids.

Nola (55, 3rd marriage) first got married at 26 with the AEDO. He came to propose her while she still stayed with her parents. When she told her parents about the proposal they said she should decide herself whether she liked him. Decided to agree in order to be helped with her problems: helping in the field, having enough clothes. Her mother could not provide enough clothes for her. He gave her soap and clothes while they were zibwenzi, which gave her the impression he would provide for her as husband too. They married after 1 month, after which she followed him to stay in his house. Says this was her first proposal [not ugly...]. husband rovided for her indeed, but started
having several wives, coping the behavior of some of his friends. Then she decided to move back to her parents and farm with them. She did not accept sharing her husband because: difficult to find all she needs, most things go to the others. Tried to advise him, he kept assuring her that he would still be providing her everything, but things changed anyhow. She had the responsibility of taking care of (their 2) kids, so couldn't accept this. Started selling zigumu and zitumbuwa at [large commercial estate] to find own income. Second husband was plumber at [large commercial estate], who proposed her while she did her BS there. She told him to first meet her parents, which he did, all agreed. Later he started drinking, and had another wife elsewhere. She didn't divorce him, hoping he would change. One day he just went to that other wife after work, without even saying goodbye. Since 11 years Nola is with current husband, who lived nearby and sent his parents to her brother. She had by then lost her parents and decided it was better to be married. Is a very good husband: doesn't drink beer, work on field together, found kids from other men but is not mistreating them.

Pamela (27, divorced) man from Zomba, visiting relatives in Mudzi B, came to her to propose after he had seen her pass by. She agreed, told him to talk to her parents, who said to her: “If you want...” She lived with younger sister of mother after mother died and therefore decided it was good to marry. His relatives said he was a good man (asked after accepting his proposal). Was indeed good husband: gave her money, buying soap, whenever she asked for anything he would provide. But his mother wanted him to have more wives, even brought them to their HH, where he used to sleep with them, sometimes for a month. “Bringing other women to our house means you don't want me anymore, I better leave,” she told husband. husband told her not to ask about it. She was still young didn't want to suffer from mother-in-law, and she sent him away. He was ok with that, had another wife to go to. [Jane told Gertrude different story about Pamela: was caught by husband sleeping with his brother and sent back to Mudzi B, where she got involved with doctor from Balaka. When husband came to get her back, found her in bed with this doctor. And later doctor found her in bed with other man, after which they both left her. - see Gertrude's October notes for more details.] Had 3 kids together, managed through help of mother-in-law (?). Both she and ex sent money to help her take care of kids. Both kids now stay with father, 1 died. Has baby too, says from man from M. village who cheated her that he wanted to marry her, but stopped coming. Doesn't want to get involved with anymore now, will just lead to more problems, giving birth to more children to take care of. Someone who proposes you saying: “I have maize, I have a job” is just cheating you (too good to be true). [Gertrude wonders where Pamela finds her money, never spoke of doing ganyu, of having a BS, having a man. But can buy fertilizer now that she received coupon, and bought some of Gertrude's knitwork for baby.] Said herself in interview that her uncle sometimes helps her, and that her brother in SA (working at filling station, the one I saw pictures of) promised to help her.

Evelin (27, widow) was proposed at 17 on her way to the hospital by a man she had not seen before, who asked her name and village, whether she was married and had kids, then said “I like you, I want to get married to you.” Three days later however, he
came to Mudzi B and said it would be better to first be chibwenzi, without specifying when they would marry. She agreed to both offers because of “mavuto”: lacking soap, clothes, food (policeman brother in LL sent money, but not enough, and she did ganyu). He told her he was messenger at District Coordinator’s office, 30 yrs, not married. She was proud of him. He helped her, brought her soap, clothes, food, built her a house. She cooked for him. Came once/twice a month - never lived with her in Mudzi B, she never with him in Balaka. When he was sent to Mangochi to work there in 2004, she joined him with their 2 kids. He died in 2006 from cholera, after 1 week illness. Had been a good husband.

Haliday (30, 1st marriage - husband at SA filling station = brother of Pamela & Venesi) met husband in church, started chibenzi for 1.5 yrs. He lived in Lilongwe, she in Mudzi B, wrote each other letters and he visited once a month and brought soap. She loved him, therefore in relationship, she only gave back love... After 1.5 yr he joined her in Mudzi B and they married. Was good husband: amandivetsa [he dressed me], work in field together, helped in HH. Went to SA in 2006, call each other once/twice a day. He sends her money whenever somebody travels from there to here. When that money finishes, he tells her to borrow for time being.

Thokozani (daughter of Rosemary, married to son of Hilda) met her husband in school (he St8, she St6) in Mangochi where he had gone to stay with relatives, were in chibwenzi for 1 yr until they married in 2005. They just loved each other, only met in school, parents didn't know. He gave her soap, money, lotion (through ganyu and begging from relatives). She didn't give him anything. When parents found out, they said it is better to marry. During interview husband gets out of bafa, puts on jeans, shirt, sneakers and hat, and gets on bike. Thokozani asks him whether he is leaving. “I'll be back on Sunday afternoon,” he answers (today Friday), with money for trees to build roof of their new house. She then told him he should not forget to pass by her uncle, looking sad. When I ask her where he is going she says: Visiting my uncle... He is good husband, she says, they have no problems... Says they met and married in Mangochi and only moved to Mudzi B when Thokozani wanted to follow her mother to here, very coincidental that this was also village where husband's parents live. She does most farming because husband is busy helping constructing houses (carrying bricks, plastering - received phone when plastering Haliday's house). When maize finished he will do ganyu to find money to buy.

Ada (daughter of Hilda) just gave birth to first child, but father of child had already left her by then. Pamela once said while knitting: “I don't understand girls of Mudzi B, just have sex in bushes. Do you remember how you cheated your mother, saying you were going to the tailor for a school uniform, but secretly meeting your boyfriend, getting pregnant in the bushes??” Another time, when I asked Ada whether her husband had already showed up again, Pamela filled in: He is married somewhere else, that woman also recently gave birth. On one of our first days, when Ada was still pregnant, boys on our veranda asked what made all her man to leave her while she was still pregnant, this being the second time... Own story: Last year man was partaking in initiation ceremonies in M. village, where she went to bring food to relative. She wanted to be proposed, wanted to be in relationship, had problems finding enough food. He behaved well until he disappeared. If he comes back, will chase him for leaving me like that.
Holy (35, 1st marriage) was proposed at school. She St6, he St8. He knew he couldn't continue to secondary school because of school fees. She agreed because was her age to marry, was waiting for someone to propose. Had received more proposals earlier, but felt not ready yet then. maybe God guided her in excepting this proposal, because still together without problems. Planned to be chibwenzi for 4 months, after which marriage, so he could gather money for kitchen tools etc (through ganyu & selling pepper which he grew). She made him give her a present in those 4 months, because she was afraid to become pregnant (didn't know about birth control methods). He gave her a watch, with which she could prove to her parents that he'd marry her if she got pregnant/prove the child was his. They prospered, which led to jealousy. Therefore decided to move to Mudzi B. Hb is pastor at African Continent church, therefore cannot do things on his own, has to discuss everything with her (e.g. expenditure).

Florence (23, 1st marriage) was proposed on way back from nearest tradingcenter where she had visited friend, Dec 24. Started as chibwenzi, married in January. Brought her gifts, provided everything for her, even food. She respected him - unlike other girls he had proposed to, e.g. putting water in bafa, kneeled to give a drinking water when he asked for that.

Alida (55, widow) refused proposer from nearest tradingcenter for 1 month when she was 15. He was 18 yrs, kept coming, giving money, bringing relish. He encouraged her to marry him. Was indeed a good husband: no beating, no fighting, eating together, worked on field together. Died in 1983 (she 30 yrs, had 4 kids, all died, stays with granddaughter which supplies her with her only income from Orphan Care, 1500 MK). Didn't want to remarry.

Rashida (45, 3th marriage) was proposed at 18 when she visited a relative in his vlg. She allowed after 1 week, was just staying anyway, wanted to get married. Didn't know anything about him, would find out during marriage. Says: “In the past it was not good to just move around, asking people about his behavior, samaletsa.” (other people did it though, but she decided just to get married. However, when her mother died and she wanted to move from his to her vlg, husband refused. She was not staying well with his relatives and decided to go back alone (& 2 kids) at 21. Stayed alone for 4 yrs, did ganyu to manage. Second husband was from Mudzi A, proposed and she agreed. Was a good one: took care of the children he found. Stayed together for 5 yrs, got 3 kids but all died. Then both their mothers came to advise them to end marriage, because they were apparently not procreating... His parents took everything with them, incl husband. Stayed alone for 1 yr, working at large commercial estate. When another man (from other vlg) proposed in 2003 she allowed after “a long time” (1 month), when her work stopped at [large commercial estate] (women could only plant and weed, men stayed for lifting cotton bales on truck). She was “just staying alone”, would be difficult to feed kids after her work ended, better get married so he can help her. husband has own field which he cultivates, while she works with children on hers. Grow the same crops, which they put together after
Daughter of 15 Monya gave birth to baby in Aug, wants to marry baby's father but mother won't allow, wants daughter to go back to school while mother takes care of baby.

Yona (mother of Victoria, 70, widow) married at 17 with boy in school. Met when both in St3. He said “ndikukufunani banja” but she refused because wanted to continue school. Then men said she could continue school while he got prepared for marriage, then she agreed. Stayed 2 yrs in chibwenzi while by tried to get employed. After those 2 years he joined his father in Bulawayo (mother at Chiradzulo with kids) where he found employment at the railway company and called her to join him, which she did. There he proposed to other women too and when Yona once met them on the road she started fighting. The police came and put her in prison for 6 months. Then uncle came to pick her and kids back to Chiradzulo. Yona then started BS of selling thobwa & zitumbuwa. Uncle gave her money to start. Decided to stop BS when she married second husband.

Second husband worked at Limbe company in Chiradzulo with her brother. When Yona went to see brother, man spotted her and asked brother about her behavior. At home brother told Yona man wants to marry her. Stayed almost 3 months without agreeing, still remembering the past. Asked around about his behavior and was told than he was divorced. In those months man both her soap, salt, clothes. Then she agreed. Stayed together in Limbe, but had place in Mudzi A where they cultivated land for maize. When husband died in 1974 after 6 yrs of marriage she moved to their (iron sheeted) house in Mudzi A II.

Lizzie (19, married, husband in SA) met Hb at chinamwali ceremony. He said “ndikukufunani banja”, but added that he would marry her after 1 yr, to get prepared first. She agreed. During that year he brought her money from his clothes BS. With the money she bought soap, clothes, salt, ndiwo. Married indeed after 1 yr, in Feb 2008. After a month of marriage he left for SA. She knew about this, and was happy about it, is a good thing that he will be there, sending support. Sleeps with some small boys in the house because afraid alone, and eats with little mother in next house. husband told her to stop school in Form 3. Now that he is in SA she tries to convince him to allow her to go back to school, but he refuses, saying that she wants to find another husband there, jealous... Did fish BS for a while, buying at Liwonde, selling here, but stopped because no profits.

Alma (60?, single, 3x married) first husband from F. vlg, came to propose marriage at her parents house where she was staying. Agreed at that very same time because “was time to get married. God says men should be with a woman and other way around. Only God would know whether this man would be good for her.” Married that same week, in Oct. She chased him in January because he was beating her after drinking beer. Moved back into mother’s house who took care of her again. Reported divorce to chief Mudzi B, so that ex-husband would be fined 40 Tambala - “was lot of money in past”, which he paid to her. After 5 months this chief came to propose. He already had 2 wives, she agreed to be third. Kukhala pakhomo alone ndi
vuto + chikalidwe [Staying alone in the household was difficult + his behavior]. Was good husband: kulima [farming], kuveka [provide clothes], kumanga nyumba [built house], taking care of kids from first husband, eating well. He was providing equally to 3 wives [in her opinion]. But later the other 2 wives decided to end the marriage (says later that husband told her from beginning he had problems with other wives and would divorce them). She stayed as only wife until he died. After death stayed alone with children, the Catholics helped her. Also husband left lots of property, sold his radio e.g.. But then his relatives came and took it all. Stayed 1 year alone, just working hard in the field. A new man came to propose her at home, waited 2 months for him to gather money, during this period he did not provide anything, she just hoped he would be providing in marriage. He said they would be working in field together, so... Stayed together for 1 year after which he disappeared with the money from their cotton harvest to marry another wife. After which she got so angry that she ended the marriage. The man refused to end the marriage, but then she gave him 1 tambala to show that she was serious (?). Still he keeps coming back to propose sometimes, but she doesn’t want because she is growing old now. Men bring problems. Now that she stays alone and works hard in the field alone she is doing better than some of the married couples. Some of those married couples lack salt, but she does not. Just surrender, didn’t want to try marriage again, afraid of same behaviors. But has had enough proposal, up till now. Been alone now for about 20 years. Doesn’t miss anything not having a husband: when she wants oil, buys oil, when she wants to drink thobwa, drinks thobwa. A husband could have been disturbing her, e.g. taking some of her money for his own things. Son built house for her, previous house was built by second husband. Once a woman came to her house when her own husband had not come home, thinking that since this one is single, he may be with her. Putting on nice clothes, Alma added, may lead others to suspect that you sleep around. Gave birth to 8 children, but only 3 are still alive. Lives with her son and 4 granddaughters. Son is working as a teacher. Furthermore, she sells maize and groundnuts (joked: These groundnuts are my husband now!). Has daughter in Blantyre, married to a driver, who built nice white plastered house next to her small compound, where she now seems to store her groundnuts. This daughter gave her coupon to mother last yr, because she had already bought her own fertilizer in Blantyre. Hired ganyu last year: group of young boys who she paid with maize and groundnuts, and 1 man who she paid 1000MK after selling some maize. Now (half Oct) also hired ganyu (oa Mr Ntawanga) to make ridges for 3000MK which she found through selling 1 bag of maize.

- Esnart (23, 1st marriage, husband 28 is SA) plans to move to own home vil when husband temporarily comes back from SA any time soon (half Nov now). Stays in very nice iron sheeted house here, with nicely decorated windowframes, even burglar bars (husband sent money from SA to build), but says that people steal from the money she gets sent by him because she is not from here (have to recheck, in interview says she was born in Mudzi B]. Man from Zomba came to Mudzi B to visit mother, who was Esnart’s neighbor. He saw Esnart when she was 19, he 24 and proposed banja. She doubted for 2 months, unsure whether to continue school or not. Later he came again and told me to stop school and get married. Meanwhile bringing soap, lotion, money which he found through ganyu. He is a good husband, because he “gives me enough money.” Lives on the money that husband sends, she decided how to use it. Works on husband’s field which he got from his mother, together with ganyu. At time of interview (Oct 27) people making ridges, will pay 3000MK with SA money. Last year also hired ganyu with husband’s SA
money, kupalira 1000MK. Bought maize in April, 25 bags she says, of which only 9 are left end Oct. When I ask about this (in HH with 2 young kids and husband’s younger brother), says she shared with others (people say that she says more often that money gets stolen, but that she actually sends it to her parents). Has no bed, she says, but has a bike and cellphone, both sent by husband. Bought her 1 goat last year Oct with SA money, decided herself. Talks to husband 2/3 times a day, but doesn’t know what job he does. Maybe just sweeping oid, and afraid that she will tell people in the village, so he prefers to keep it hidden. Said at time of interview that she has fever/malaria about 3 times a month, went to hospital but to no avail. But I haven’t heard that she has indeed often been ill lately (half Nov).

Vanessa (1987, first marriage, 2 kids): Tinakumana ku mpira. Was not my first time to go there to watch football & netball match. He was staying in Blantyre with mother (elder sister of chief Mudzi B). He proposed her me saying: Ndikukunani chibwenzi & we stayed almost a month before I accepted. I wanted him to know my parents first, to show that he was serious. At this time he was giving soap, money, lotion - but I was not begging for it. After 5 weeks he went to my parents to explain that he wanted to marry me. Then after a week my relatives & his relatives met where I was staying and discussed about marriage and everybody was happy. We married 2004. At that time I went to stay with him where he was staying. He is a good husband because he provides what I want like buying ndiwo, sopo, clothes, lotion. He is from Mudzi B, Yao, Islam - she from L. village (Blantyre district), Ngoni, Islam (was CCAP but followed husband). I followed husband (to stay in his home vlg) because he is from this vlg. Parents told me to follow, “lowoka” like what other tribes do, following the husband. My parents discussed with the parents of my husband that after staying here for some years I will go back with him to stay in my home vlg and we will not come back here. Gertrude asked when this will be, but Vanessa answered she doesn’t know.

Jasmine (56, 1st marriage): Man asked her parents for marriage when she was 7 yrs, married at 12 (“wochepa kwambiri” --> I was very young! Crying, running away...). Gave first birth several yrs later [how avoided? --> eventually took traditional medicine to become pregnant]. Parents allowed him to marry her because they knew he behaved well = not moving around. Came from other vlg, but was related to fam through grandmother. After first child, when husband couldn’t sleep with her, he started to spend the days and nights at another woman’s house (Jasmine followed him one day). When she discovered, went to ankhoswe after which the man stopped, leaving the other woman 6 months pregnant (child died). She says some men do this behavior because they have many children at home, are tired of that and go to a woman who has few kids; or his wife has grown old and he is curious to know the difference with a young woman.

Past vs now

Esther (88, widow) says that nowadays children don’t listen to their parents. Even the bible days
that there would come a time when children stop listening to parents - maybe that time has come now. Kids just do what they want nowadays, no matter what people say. With the end result: more children (“ana”). Eg her granddaughter has 2 kids without being married. At least women in the past waited until they had big breasts, now girls get pregnant when their breasts are still small.

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1. Ayama (app 70, 2x left) says in past there were no projects. Also people got married when they were adult, now they get married and pregnant at young age [NB she got married herself "when her breasts were still small"]! Maybe projects led to this change in behavior --> boys find money, they meet at project activities, girls are attracted to the project leaders... r may be the different behaviors of the past presidents led to changed behavior. Maybe because of poverty, girls need soap, to get what they need. Although there was more poverty in the past, no work then, now at least some can get employed.

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**Project activities**

- Jasmine (56, 1st marriage) has been told to stop participating in the FIDP activities in Mudzi A because of my arrival, only people from village itself are now allowed...

- Hamra (2nd marriage) says she received no fert coupon, GVH told her that there are not enough, she will receive maize seeds: “But what is use of maize seeds without fert?” she asks angrily. In trying to get fields prepared for planting asap because by end Oct her maize will be finished and then she will need to go for ganyu. Has 6 goats which all came from FIDP (3th yr now). Was told to choose, goats were indeed received but chicken club did not receive anything yet. Participated in mushroom activity too, but stopped because madzi. Joined tree planting because told so by chairman of club, but sees no benefit yet. Plans to sell some goats until she has 10.

10. Tumanene (26, 2nd marriage) or husband attended seminar about teaching the lame/blind with which they paid (partly, also sold goat) for his trip to SA (passport, transport).

11. Blessings (28, 1st marriage) registered for “CBO” - doesn't know which activities it will undertake, people came from Balaka, they promised to come again later to explain about the activities but haven't showed up yet.

12. Molly (27, 2nd marriage, child before ever married) participated in Concern Universal tree planting project “to develop village” and because they “were told that after this they could come to give out loans.” She wants to join, but hasn’t thought about type of BS yet as money is not really there yet.

13. Venesi (36, 2 ended marriages) felt she was the husband, providing for family through
BSs started with loans from Concern Universal. Concern Universal asked chief for people from vlg who were free to get loan, in groups of 10 (4 men, 6 women). Went to 3 day seminar to learn about running a BS, could afterwards borrow 5000MK max, which she did. Had to start repaying after 2 weeks 775 MK. Whenever she was unable to pay back, she borrowed from others for this. Bought fish at lake and maize in vlg, in June. Then took a new loan of 7000MK, for trading beans. Then another 5000MK loan to trade chicken. Then a 200MK loan for tomatoes (repaying 310 every 2 weeks, in total 480 MN interest = almost 25%). The businesses she does depend on the season, in cotton season will sell more. Chooses to take new loans all the time (ondanks high interest rates) because it is difficult to gather such amounts by saving: someone gets ill etc. Proudly says that she decided on expenditure since her BSs, while before it was husband. Recently divorced him: Better to be alone than having to take care of him. Says she would also have divorced him without her BS, “could do ganyu.” In Mudzi A Concern Universal started the same microcredit scheme, but there it stopped when some men used the money to buy beer, couldn’t repay, led to quarrels in group. When I ask her about development projects she participates in, she does not mention the Concern loan. When I point this out to her, she says she indeed does not consider these loans a project, she makes proper BS, no charity!

Emra (22, first marriage) participates in Concern Universal tree planting project because: (laughs) “just following what others are doing.”

14. Valentine (24, first marriage) is not participating in the Concern Universal tree planting project: “Not interested, projects often only last a short time, come and go again.”

15. Grace (21, first marriage, with child from earlier lover; hair extensions) participates in Concern Universal tree planting project because: “just following what chief told them to do.”

17. Magda (63, 2nd marriage) said that FIDP had promised it would come to buy the manure produced by the trees. But later came to say that villagers should just be using the manure themselves. Then people stopped participating, were only interested to get money. But she herself does find that it help, improves the soil. But planting trees each yr, all farmland will turn into woodland! Tree planting already started under PROSCAP, leaves make manure for fertility.

1. Wealth vs poor

Eveles (old, widow): “These days young girls like money too much, and will therefore not reach my age… [?] Men propose to them, give them some money to sleep with them and then they become infected with the disease [matenda]. Many people already died in Mudzi A because
of the disease: there are so many orphans these days… “

These days, 4 girls may be waiting for one boy with some money, just to find some money (maybe need some for school). Get pregnant and therefore don’t get far in school. The same goes for adults and even old people! Because muslims are used to having several wives - this was also the case in earlier days, but less (maybe 2 wives ipv 3 or 4).

“Most Yao don’t care for school, just wait to get married.”

Holy (35, married): Moved from previous village where she had joined her husband because they did well, prospered and people became jealous. Both she and husband have poor parents, but themselves iron sheeted roof, harvested 35 bags of maize and 7 bales of cotton. Never went hungry after they started cultivating. If they harvest too little, they buy maize while prices are still low. [Why parents poor and you prospered?] husband’s parents don’t take well care, they eat all they harvest; the woman’s family does not have enough land to cultivate.

Received one fert coupon, bought another.

Gertrude was impressed, said she respected this woman for being hard working.

Hamra (56, married): [Why do men in general have more money than women?] Some boys do ganyu to find money, others grow cotton, some even steal from parents or beg from their uncles and cousins. Girls have less money than boys because they are lazy and rude (mwano), don’t listen to parents advice.

Mrs Ntawanga (46, second marriage): Some boys are from rich families, steal money from their parents and call a poor girl. Some men go for ganyu, hide the money from their wives so that they can get zibwenzi. Or single boys, still fed by mother, do MASAF project, and use the money they find on girls. Both poorer and richer girls may do this, the richer ones may see their poorer friends do this and want too. The girls may be too tired for ganyu, or have done ganyu with family and the money was taken for HH needs, or follow the example given by their mother’s behavior.

Alida (55, widow) is clearly amongst the poorest in this community: very small 1 room house, no kitchen, cooking on veranda, harvested only 2 bags of maize. Takes care of one of her orphaned granddaughters and receives money for this from an Orphan Care project, 1500/month. Because she doesn’t have enough power herself she uses part of this money to hire ganyu laborers to help her cultivate her field.

Hired & did ganyu last season: Balakasi (51, divorced); Teleza (28, divorced); Victoria (38, divorced)

Ainessi (23, married) left school in St 2 “because her father died and she had no one else to buy clothes for her.”

Emra (22, first marriage) has bike (given to husband for ganyu - cooking at a HH in Balaka) which they don't sell even though they go without food some days: if they would sell, can buy food but would only last short period of time, if they keep it, husband can go around finding ganyu
even far if there is none to be found nearby.

Valentine (24, first marriage) and husband give her grandmother money after cotton sale to keep for them, she is good at safeguarding money [uitlenen van geld ook vorm van sparen by the way!]. Will be able to eat as usual = nsima twice a day. However, breakfast may be a problem because just difficult to find here: potato, cassava, tea, bread...

Nola (55, 3th marriage) is relatively prosperous iron sheet roof, pots etc. She says this is because she applies manure before making ridges, learned from first husband who was AEDO. Later also applies fertilizer and so gets more harvest. Chief does notice that she works hard, but others don’t even come to ask how she does it. While she is willing to share her knowledge.

Holy (35, 1st marriage) and husband prospered, which led to jealousy. Therefore decided to move to Mudzi B. Parents of both are poor. Why have they themselves been able to prosper and parents not? Man's parents eat all they harvest, and wife's parents do not own enough land. They share their maize (35 bags hybrid maize) with them though in times of need. Since they have been married they have never gone hungry, when they harvest too little they buy maize when prices are still low. Last year received one coupon and bought the other. This year received 2 coupons, will go to buy as soon as she finds boys with bikes to transport the bags. Received 4 goats from FIDP, 2 for husband, 2 for wife.

Alida (55, widow) husband died when she 30 yrs, had 4 kids, all died, stays with granddaughter which supplies her with her only income from Orphan Care, 1500 MK. Didn't want to remarry. Was so smart to buy maize early with cotton money (4 bags a 1500MK ipv 3000). Sometimes hires ganyu, because to weak to work field herself, with money from Orphan Care. Hired people to burn bricks for her last year, but found no money to build bigger house. Now goats are destroying the bricks, she thinks of selling them...

Gertrude: Possible reason why men generally have more money than women: can do more ganyu, can do harder labor; and are more serious at running BS.

Rashida (45, 3th marriage) says her biggest problem is njala (+lack of blankets, difficult to take care of children). They do have a bike though: for son who is in Form 3 to go to school. If they would sell, he can’t continue school. Son pays his own school fees with money from Orphan Care - hence is not her own son, but of deceased sister. Boy is brother to Doris.

One of the sons of Chenawe (70, 3rd marriage) died last year after being ill for long time, his wife (who also had children with other man) died 2 weeks ago. Esnart will go to pick up the ones of her son to stay with her, and register these orphans as living at HER HH not there!

Aisha (28, left behind) got pregnant while still in school. Left school and started BS of buying and selling veggies. Boyfriend didn't provide anything, so she didn't want to stay with him, stayed alone. While moving around with her veggies, man proposed to be zibwenzi. But she said: “Did that before, am done with that now.” He thought for a week, then answered that he didn't have a wife either, so he agreed to marry her. She didn't know whether this one would provide for her or not. He was poorer than boyfriend, but at least they worked in the
field together and did ganyu together. Now he sell fish. In 2007 husband (Islamic Yao) married other wife and then divided his time between his two wives in different villages. But since some months hasn’t come at all anymore. Last season did send someone to help Aisha cultivate her field. When she is in need of things like soap or ndiwo, she sends one of her kids to his father to ask for it. But sometimes ex-husband has no money to buy. Never gives money, always the items asked for. In Oct a new house was being built for her - by her ex-husband who does not want to be talked about as bad man, leaving her without anything. Had promised this to her while still married - with iron sheet roof! She plans to start BS, because husband does not send her enough. By selling fish from the house (cannot move around with small children who need food). But not yet, first work on the field now [Oct 2008].

Naima (21, 2nd marriage) complains about not having enough kitchen tools: only 7 plates, 2 pots and 1 tin bucket. Gertrude later laughs, “only?? And they eat together from the same plates!”

Magda (63, 2nd marriage) hires young boys to help on field, weeding, for 20/30MK. “Adults need more money, but young boys work cheap.” Have beautiful house that was built for them by son who had gone to Chancellor College and worked in Blantyre, but died. Another son was teacher, died too. The only other working child is a nurse, she has to take of all the orphans now, therefore difficult to take care of parents too... Son who was teacher had bought parents pigs, for manure and as source of money.

Teleza (28, divorced) hired ganyu for weeding (“can't manage on my own”), sold a goat to find money. Also did ganyu herself.

Josephine (52, 2nd marriage) sometimes sell maize because of problems. Preferably not, but when forced by circumstances. Sold last June at [nearest tradingcenter] 1 bag at 1500 MK to get clothes for granddaughter to go to school and a chitenje for herself. husband uses all incoming money for beer. Sleep under chitenje. But did apply fertilizer last yr, with coupon and MASAF. Income sources: selling their nandolo and maize, ganyu. Has no working children who can help her.

Faith (27, 1st marriage, husband been in SA) does not want her grass roof to show on her picture. She will start cooking smaller portions of nsima when the mango's are ripe to fill stomach with. While doing the interview a bike taxi is there with a woman to pick up some of the blankets that Maria's husband brought from woman's husband in SA for her. Will start growing cotton this year with the money that her husband made in 13 months in SA: rent 1 acre, buy materials.

Victoria (38, divorced): after husband left her with 4 small kids managed through farming and selling some crops (eg cotton), and sometimes ganyu when in need of soap. Is not looking for a new husband now, afraid of same behavior. [NB is building a new house with iron sheets! Says she doesn't receive anything for 4 days/wk 3 hours teaching at Concern Universal adult school], but Venesi says they receive 1000MK/month]. Thieves stole about 2 bags of her cotton. Hired ganyu in December for weeding and did in January (kupalira & kubandira).

Maria (22, left behind) and Josephine have chicken by borrowing chicken from others and multiplying them, afterwards give back parents and some of the offspring. Esther (88, widow) got her pigs by borrowing pigs from friend, feed them and receive big in return.
Nosalt (29, married) husband in prison. Survival: went to husband's work and received some maize from his boss, her mother helps out (father used to help a lot but died last yr), difficult to eat at relatives, will just work hard in the field. Last yr hired ganyu after husband begged money from her father. husband also did ganyu. Did not receive coupon last yr.

Belita (46, second marriage) would eat good food, with oil, if she had money.

Mery (74, widow) has a sister in Blantyre who has working children who Mery goes to to get support sometimes. Her own children in Mudzi A help her too. Hired ganyu for weeding (paid with maize) and did herself too.

Esther (88, widow) owns 7 acres but cannot cultivate all.

Zara (28, 2nd marriage) husband left for SA on Sept 24 for first time with uncle who stays there. Had discussed about it together, will stay there maybe ¾ years. She is happy about it, because he will sending help. (Faith and Haliday say they are used to being without husband (in SA), don't feel lonely oid). Sold a goat and maize to pay for his transport and passport. Spends more time doing ganyu than working on own field: mornings ganyu, afternoons own. Have already changed their eating (Oct), using smaller pots to cook nsima, the one that is usually used for ndiwo.

Balakasi (51, divorced) shared maize harvest with her adult children when they come to beg for it.

Nyamwale (app 50, 1st marriage) says they spend more time doing ganyu than on own field, even though husband also makes mats for income.

Rebecca (18, 1st marriage, husband 21) & husband still have 7 bags of maize left at time of interview, while they only harvested 5: bought in April when prices where low, afraid that later when their own maize would finish they could not afford to buy because of high prices... Rebecca is not participating in the adult school, because she knows how to read & write [husband makes enough money with clothes BS]. Besides receiving one coupon, they had bought 1 coupon last year at 500MK with money from husbands BS. Hire ganyu, don't do. Has a bike that she got from uncle working in SA.

Sweetness (35, 2nd marriage) and husband don't grow cotton because they don't have enough field (1.5 acre) and cannot afford to rent, better use what they have for maize. Her agri problem is that they spend more time doing ganyu than on their own field. Have received a coupon but no money yet to buy, will do ganyu to find. All money from husband's BS is used for food these days. Did not participate in MASAF [Sweetness]--> not registered. Do have a phone, which husband [of Sweetness] received from his brother.

Malita (62, 2x divorced) has no livestock because “receives money from Orphan Care (3000MK/month) but has responsibility to take care of those orphans, plus many funerals in her family...” [Recently lost daughter in Blantyre] Sold 1 of her 4 bags of maize at 250MK (!) to buy soap, ndiwo, paraffin, salt. Also sold the half basket of nandolo that she harvested (100MK) because her grandson died and she needed to buy materials for a coffin. But she will be eating as usual because of the Orphan Care money. Brews masese beer for sale (but not now because of daughter's death, first wait for ceremony).

Jasmine (56, 1st marriage) says during interview that they finished their maize in
August already, and that they will find money to buy through ganyu and BS. Mid Oct Gertrude overears them discussing at our mat that when their maize finishes they should buy ufa directly in Balaka. Also says in interview that they will change their eating habits (although as elder one she will still eat more): smaller portions, in morning cassava, filling water with stomach, complains that there at not enough mango's this year. But beginning of Nov Gertrude sees her eat nsima in the morning. Didn't mention she was in pig club (with Kima) in interview. Both her and daughter Innocent say in interview they did ganyu last year in December to buy maize.

Fatima (17, 1st marriage) husband decides on expenditure because he is the one doing ganyu. Receive money from his brother in SA too. With last cotton harvest money he decided to buy kitchen tools, because up till then they had been borrowing his mother's ziwiya. She said in interview they sleep on bed, husband says later that she lied; she said they have radio, he later says they sold it because they had problem - but Gertrude later heard their radio very loud after they have received money from his brother in SA; phone he bought with money he found through helping a relative in field; bike he received from his father (whose wife said he himself rides on a borrowed bike to go and play card).

Lovely (29, 1st marriage) did not have enough food for family before her husband went to SA, now walks around with cellphone around neck and has enough maize to last her till March (although she is using smaller pots to cook now). Says people just think differently, that's why some decide to go to SA and others stay, not thinking about future. Some women go too, but she can't, has to take care of their 3 children (3 others died). Has a field at dambo, does do wintercropping, growing maize and pumpkin. But there are too many people growing there, with too little water. So she brings water from borehole twice a day. Her husband [in SA] told her to buy goats with money he sends from SA when the prices are low because of njala, at about 2000MK. When the money he sends finishes before new arrives, she selles some maize. husband left May 2007, talk over phone about 3x/wk. Hasn't told her the work he does there, hasn't come back yet. Sends her money and items via others, (a tv and charging connectors for phones. She is just keeping these things till he returns, he will have a plan with them, will know what to do. He went because of “umphawi” [poverty], following younger brother. Paid for trip by selling maize ans tomatoes - before he left he sold tomatoes at large scale at the market, by bike. Now she only sells from house. With money she sends, she can hire ganyu. Plan to eventually move to town, build a house there and then rent it out. Themselves may still stay in vlg, continue farming. Others coming back from SA usually build house in vlg. Elube is mother of Lovely. This yr may start growing cotton: in past people sold at high prices, but then price reduced o 70MK/kg, now good prices again however, 100MK/kg. At time of interview had 3 adults making ridges for her, doing 1.5 acre, paying 4500MK when work is finished. the other half acre she does herself. Will hire young boys to do the weeding. Grows local and hybrid maize: put hybrid in bags with chemicals, started eating these. Local can be kept more easily, is not attacked by weavils.

Jeneti (37, left 2x--) Often ill, she says, and has sores on skin...) This yr bought 20 irons sheets, partly with cotton money, partly from selling maize (has 3 acres). Next yr will be able to pay for putting sheets up (trees, nails, labor etc). Both did (kupalira, kubandira in Dec+Jan) and hired ganyu (paying with money, others with maize). Now has 1 woman making ridges on 0.5 acre for 1000MK. Still has 5 bags of maize (end Sept), which could last her till next harvest if she not needed to sell some of it, e.g. to buy ndiwo. and pay daughter Modesta's secondary school fees. Because she was ill, thieves stole her nandolo and cassava. Has a bed and radio, both bought through selling maize. The bed was decided by husband in 2003, the radio she decided herself after husband took theirs.
Tumanene (26, 2nd marriage) First marriage at 19, “to take care of each other.” Lasted 2 years, child was about a yr when she decided to leave him, had come to dislike him she says: nkhanza, talkative. Stayed alone 4 yrs, went to Lilongwe where parents/aunt/uncle were, and found job at a HH in area 47 via relative working at Escom, cooking & nanny. Earned 4500MK/month, got soap and food where she stayed. Gave part of salary to mother who was taking care of child and kept some herself for clothes and savings. When she returned to Mudzi B bought maize with this money. Stayed with her parents and worked the field until proposed in 2006. Allowed “to have enough.” Mother supplied everything, but was a big family, better get married so mother can take better care of others. She didn't first ask around about his behavior, because: “people can cheat you, may not you to marry him, only way is to find out yourself.” At this moment they are staying well together, no nkhanza, work on field together, but doesn't talk much about future... Since March husband to SA, sent money (3800MK) for first time last month (Aug), used to buy soap, clothes, sick child to hospital, money is finished now. They talk each weekend on phone of Lovely, but doesn't know what job he does. Will wait for new money (hire ganyu, buy plastic sheet for grass roof), otherwise do ganyu, MIL helps too sometimes with ndiwo or soap. Hasn't been growing cotton because didn't see benefit, but now sees there is and will start. Comparing LL to vlg: in town have to buy everything, nkhuni, ndiwo, maize, rent land. Definitely prefers to stay here in vlg. To finance husband's trip to SA, he tailored, they sold goats and she attended a seminar to teach blind people.

When husband of Blessings (28, 1st marriage) left for SA he arranged her brother to stay with his wife and kids. Blessings decided on expenditure, as she is “the owner of the family/kids”. She joined him in SA for 2 yrs (cooking, washing etc in HH), wants to go back as it makes her proud to work in SA. Returned to Mudzi B when she found herself pregnant, but will return when this one is old enough to be left behind = 3 yrs (also left other kid at 3 - sending money to mother to take care of them). Got blood test second wk of Nov, she told friends at borehole, but didn't mention result.

Met husband in primary school, were in relationship for 2 yrs, discussing that they would marry in the future. He sometimes bought her soap and lotion with money that he got from his parents, which he then brought to her parent's house where she stayed. Therefore she liked him, made her hope he'd be good husband, and indeed still is. She left school in Form 1 to marry (not pregnant, mother divorced father, no school fees & 'was just childish to stop'), he finished secondary. He born in Balaka town where they stayed until he left for SA in 2000, then she moved back to Mudzi B. Eats with mother, but sleeps in own house. He sends her money through bank account or with a traveler. When the money finishes she calls him for more. He works in shop in Capetown. Uses the money for things in HH: food, salt, soap, plates, blankets. husband told her to buy beds for the children. Bought screen, DVD player, typewriter, all to sell when husband returns. Hires ganyu, but also works herself in field, and also sold maize to pay for ganyu. Also before husband left to SA they had enough food, because he worked in PTC in Balaka. Difference SA vs vlg: very different, here difficult to find food, also behavior is different: there girls with tight trousers and naked bellies; easier to get employed there; more Indians and azungu there, therefore more developed and richer. He was the one who decided she should come to SA as he sent money for passport and transport. [Blessings] Is not growing cotton because is sold at once, better cultivate maize and keep.

NB In Mudzi B much less people say they grow cotton than in Mudzi A. Check fields whether this is true, or whether they were told to say so by GVH to look more deprived?

Amila (36, 2nd marriage) has callosity on top of her head, from carrying so much water, says Gertrude. Also some other women have this, even saw a girl with it - daughter of Holy. Amila has a field at dimba, but stopped winter cropping after thieves stole crops. As her
field lies low, groundnuts were last yr destroyed by heavy water. At time of interview (25 Sept) she had just taken her last maize to the chigayo (had harvested 1/3 nkhokwe on 1 acre of land, hers - husband has none; applied no fert). Has started ganyu now to buy maize after this finishes. Will only eat porridge or smaller portions of nsima (2 ipv 3 cups of water). Has no blankets, only 1 child has a school uniform. Had a chicken, but a disease killed it last year (say more people in that side of vlg). She lives near some women who are relatively well off, because husband's in SA, but is not helped by them. Ashamed (manyazi) to beg for help, better to ask them for ganyu. husband sometimes disappears to home vlg, especially when moon appears, goes mad, misses home. Received a coupon this year, but had no money to buy so gave it to uncle who didn't give her anything in return. It's dangerous to receive money for it, so didn't sell. This year was told that everybody would receive, sharing 1 coupon for 2 types of fertilizer with 2 people. So she and husband decided to start ganyu early to find enough money to buy fert this year. Was one of the few who was enlisted to participate in the MASAF project. When she received the money, told friends she was going to buy the fertilizer soon. Started ganyu in Aug: kusosa + kugalauza mizere, to find soap. Then quickly back to own field so they can plant early and asap eat green maize.

Kondwani (35, left - sister of chief Mudzi B) is one of poorer people in Mudzi B, I estimate. But did hire ganyu last year, with money sent by ex-husband, This year won't. Started already looking for ganyu to do herself (end of Sept). Saw bundle of grass next to house: bought with money from cassava BS: 100 MK. But still has to buy trees, her father will then help, free of charge. Has to put new roof every year. Last year applied fertilizer, bought with MASAF money. But this year she wasn't enlisted for MASAF - only very few in vlg were. Will now have to find ganyu to get money to buy the fert - did receive coupon. Maybe wait for rains to start to weed for money...

Salika (39, abandoned 2x - chief Mudzi B) grows local maize because hybrid needs money for chemicals against weavils. Her son did ganyu last year to find food because she was pregnant (and left behind). Already end Sept eating their last maize, therefore changes to eating phala for lunch and nsima for dinner. Has one blanket, a mat, no radio/bike/phone/livestock. But 2 kids have school uniform. Is her 5th year as chief now, mother was growing too old (blind & deaf old woman). She doesn't receive anything for this (looking after people and advising them), but GVH does. Says begin Nov that she didn't participate in MASAF, but had come to Gertrude earlier to order some knitwork for her baby, paying with part of the money she will receive from MASAF...

Grace (21, first marriage, with child from earlier lover; hair extensions) husband has fish BS at lake. Cultivate half their field (1.5 acre) themselves, other half ganyu. She used to sell fish herself too, but stopped because husband tolr her too. She would like to restart, begs husband for money, but he says it's not a good time yet. But he sometimes leaves for a week, without leaving enough money, therefore she wants own BS - anything but mandasi... They have sufficient money for food, but it is difficult to find breakfast type of food, have to go far: potato, cassava, rice.

Dora (42, single, 2 marriages - mother of Dorica) sold 2 bales of cotton at [small crossroads market] in July for 18000MK, which she used to buy a pot, clothes, blanket, tin, ndiwo and also kept some which she is using now to buy food. Will also do ganyu (kupalira) with kids, and cook less full pots of food. In Feb they will at least be able to eat fresh maize. husband had borrowed money to start tin making BS in Mangochi, but never came back to repay, the people who he borrowed from then took her goats. Has a son who works at [large commercial estate], and gives her some
money at end of each month. Grow tomatoes to sell (but now finished - end Sept); sometimes
selling maize or livestock (pigeons, chicken, goats in past); ganyu.

- Venesi (36, 2 ended marriages) teaches at Concern Universal adult school, 4 days/week 3
  hours, receiving 1000MK/month. Took out various loans from Concern Universal. Eats less
  these days (end Sept): tean and rice ipv nsima at lunch - for dinner still a lot of nsima.

Molly (27, 2nd marriage, child before ever married) husband works seasonally for cotton company,
buying cotton. Is also tailor (at 'grocery'). Yet they also do ganyu: kupalira “at people who have a lot
of maize” and pay with maize.

- Yona (mother of Victoria, 70, widow) married at 17 with boy in school. Met when both in St3.
  He said “ndikukufunani banja” but she refused because wanted to continue school. Then men
  said she could continue school while he got prepared for marriage, then she agreed. Stayed 2
  yrs in chibwenzi while by tried to get employed. After those 2 years he joined his father in
  Bulawayo (mother at Chiradzulo with kids) where he found employment at the railway
  company and called her to join him, which she did. There he proposed to other women too
  and when Flocy once met them on the road she started fighting. The police came and put her
  in prison for 6 months. Then uncle came to pick her and kids back to Chiradzulo. Flocy then
  started BS of selling thobwa & zitumbuwa. Uncle gave her money to start. Decided to stop BS
  when she married second husband. Later also did fish BS, but stopped now because of high
  transport costs. Bought clothes, ndiwo, soap, pig, school fees with profit. Last yr her daughter
did MASAF to buy her fertilizer. Hired ganyu in kupalira (January) after selling a goat, paying
1000MK. When their maize finishes (1 bag left on Oct 10) will eat phala in morning, skip
lunch, nsima for dinner. Has a bike that is used by grandson to go to school which Flocy
bought with the money she received from Limbe Company when husband died.

- Lizzie (19, married, husband in SA) sold maize in May although prices were low then because
  she needed money. Made ridges on own field with ganyu labor, paying them 2800MK -
money sent by husband from SA. Will do kupalira in Dec if husband does not send money.
Already bought 2 bags of maize with money that husband sent. Will be eating as usual (=
phala, nsima, nsima) because when eating less, means cannot manage to work hard in field...
Already bought a radio with money husband sent (decided herself), husband also sent a
cellphone. Bike and 3 goats inherited from mother. Chicken bought with SA money, decided
herself. Is building kitchen, toilet, bafa.

- Alma (60?, single, 3x married) has been alone for over 20 years, she says. Managing fine on
  her own, working hard on field, doing better than some of the married couples. Some of
those lack salt, while she does not. Has 1.5 acre, and harvested a full nkhokwe of local maize
this year (had two fertilizer coupons, one from daughter, bought with money from selling
groundnuts) and 3 bags of groundnuts. Sells maize and groundnuts. When we went to buy
some Chalimbana groundnuts from her she said they were her husband - through them she
can find the things she needs. This year got one coupon, sold maize and groundnuts to pay
(people buy for food and in Nov also for planting), but daughter borrowed money and hasn’t
paid back yet. Will apply manure in top of ridges before the rains fall when she does not have
enough
fertilizer. Did not participate in MASAF, because wasn’t registered by GVH, she only registered relatives, says Alma. HH has 2 beds which she bought after selling maize, no livestock. Has 4 granddaughters living with her + son who works as teacher. [Do they eat from more fields than hers alone? Is income son used to buy food for HH?]

- Fiona (84, widow) claims she cannot manage to grow cotton, but granddaughter (Ganizani) that lives with her in earlier interview said they harvested and sold 2 bales. Fiona says they harvested 3 bags of maize, Ganizani says 5. Ganizani said the HH also receives assistance from a relative in town, Fiona denies. Fiona says they applied 1 bag of fertilizer, Gertrude said 4, with 2 coupons and 2 sent by aunt in town. Fiona says they sleep under zitenje, Gertrude says the HH owns 3 blankets. When Gertrude asked Fiona again explicitly whether they do not even have 1 blanket, she kept denying. Fiona says they have 3 goats (all received from FISD), Gertrude said 5 goats and 3 sheep.

Sept 20, 2010

Telefoongesprek met Gertrude: man van zus met HIV maand geleden overleden, zus wil nu al andere man trouwen. Andere zus 2 maanden geleden getrouwd & alweer gescheiden. Moeder niet blij met gedrag van deze dochters, waarom allemaal zo snel?

Opleiding gaat goed, net weer met examens begonnen, hele week, daarna week vakantie. Tweede jaar nu, gelukkig meer boeken in bieb, vraagt of ik boeken kan opsturen, over any onderwerp, e.g. economy, want daar leren ze nu over. Had in email om flash disk gevraagd zodat ze opdrachten op eigen laptop kan maken ipv in duur internetcafé.

Heeft nu (klein!) huisje met electriciteit vlak bij school voor 5000 p/m, maar gaat daar weg, want heeft geen geld meer...

Gertrude heel blij met mijn hulp voor haar assignments, mijn uitleg begrijpt ze goed, terwijl de lessen/literatuur onduidelijker zijn. Pleuniek vertelde dat leerstof uit VS komt, voor dit soort instituten in derde wereld, daarom ook vaak: “apply to own situation...”

Uit aantekenboekje met bloemenprint:

In some interviews: I decided to end the marriage then he agreed (eg Malita, Christina).

Empowerment: How easy can women send away their husband if they are not happy with his behavior? Some say they want husband to go (no benefit, just another mouth to feed) but that he refuses to go (Elube, Jasmine, Madalitso, Hilda), saying they have nowhere to go. Others say they have decided to divorce man who they found too lazy: Eveles, Teleza, Balakasi, Saibia, Chikondi (violence), Magda (lazy & quarreling), Belita (zibwenzi), Dora (several wives), Sweetness (beer), Christina (other wife). Some left husband, moving back to
parental home: Zara (violence), Tumanene (violence, talkative), Molly (beer), Nola (several wives), 
Auleria (not providing, not coming home). Alma said: husband refused when I wanted to end the 
marriage but I gave him 1 Tambala coin (app 20 yrs ago) to show him that I was serious.
This document contains field notes of the anthropological study that led to Janneke Verheijen’s PhD dissertation Balancing men, morals and money: Women’s agency between HIV and security in a Malawi village (2013). In this dissertation many references are made to the field notes through codes. These codes refer to the specific document (P2, P3 or P8) and the specific paragraph within these documents. P2 contains the field notes of research assistant Gertrude Finyiza. P3 and P8 contain the field notes of Janneke Verheijen.

As described in the dissertation, the field notes were initially handwritten by Verheijen and Finyiza, and later typed out by a Malawian woman specially hired for this job. The typed out notes were then entered into a computer programme for qualitative data analysis (Atlas.ti). The paragraphs of the field notes were numbered by this software (explaining the sometimes strange numbering).

All documents contain the raw material – no editing of the field notes has been done accept for a replacement of all names (of both persons and places) by pseudonyms, acronyms, or XXX. Most person pseudonyms consist merely of first names, even though in reality women are generally addressed as “(grand)mother of” followed by one of their (grand)children’s names, or by the name of their father or then-husband. By which name they are addressed or talked about can vary per occasion. For readability, all these varying references were replaced by a fixed pseudonym for each woman.

**Clarification P8:**
P8 contains the field notes that have been added by Verheijen after the fieldwork period ended, hence the name “Extra notes”. The data come from the notebooks in which Verheijen made notes during the formal interviews. Most of the respondents' answers have been described in P3, but details that were later found missing were included in P8. Also occurrences that Verheijen remembered after returning from the field and that were not described while still in the field, have been included in P8. P8 furthermore contains emails and text messages from Gertrude which she sent after Verheijen returned to the Netherlands. P8 also contains the writing out of some parts of the financial diaries (see Chapter 4 for elaboration).
Glossary of frequently used ChiChewa word:

Chibwenzi = Boyfriend/girlfriend
Chitenje = Multifunctional piece of cloth that women wear over their skirts, carry their babies in on their backs, sleep on and/or under at night.
CUMO = Microfinance institute in Malawi, established by Concern Universal
Dotta = Gertrude’s English spelling of ‘daughter’
Ganyu = Piece work
Kachasu = Locally brewed gin
Kanyenya = Dried fish fried in maize flour Mandasi = snack (fried flour cake)
MASAF = Malawi Social Action Fund
Masamba = Green leaves for relish
Matemba = Dried fish
Ndiwo = Relish
Ngaiwa = Flour made of maize husks
Nkholoke = Maize granary
Nsima = Thick maize porridge (the staple food)
Thobwa = Maize flour drink/gruel
Ufa = Maize flour
Ufa woyera = White maize flour
Usipa = Small dried fish
Zibwenzi = Boyfriends/girlfriends
Zigumu = Maize flour cakes
Zitenje = Plural of chitenje
Zitumbuwa = Maize flour cakes with banana

Glossary of frequently used acronyms:

BS = business
DIL = daughter-in-law
GVH = group village head (the head of a group of villages which all have their own village head)
HH = household
MIL = mother-in-law
MK = Malawi Kwacha (national currency, at time of research 100MK = 0.5 Euro)
SA = South Africa
VH = village head/chief
Agnessi (42) was proposed in 1979 @ 13. Did not accept for 1 yr, childish, didn't know about marriage. Man kept coming, even slept at compound (not with her). After hearing more about marriage and seeing/accepting gifts, accepted after 1 yr. He brought chitenje twice, which she used to make clothes. Still with same man, but daughter Saibi tells us her father had been with another woman for some time, but now back with Agnessi.

GVH says in interview that sons in SA don't help her, only their wives. Says she harvested less than usual bcoz busy going up and down to hospital with husband. Maize finished in Aug (says she harvested only 2 bags, while having applied 2 bags of fertilizer...), has been buying since (selling parts of a big radio that owner of our house left), but doesn't know how to find food now. In past villagers would bring part of their harvest to their chief, but not anymore, doesn't know why. In past ppl were more obedient, doesn't know why. Under Kamuzu & Muluzi ppl were given food, but Mutharika only lowered price of fertilizer... Mr Ntawanga and Hamra both came to make clear that they got scared bcoz GVH was complaining about us not interviewing (“registering”) her, were very relieved when I finally agreed to do so. NOW. She had furiously complained that “Hamra is not even originally from Mudzi A, and she WAS interviewed!” Used to farm together with Hhusband on both her (2 acres) and his field (0.5 acre). But now each on own, bcoz husband used money for other wives, so she decided to farm alone on her own field, and let him farm alone on his. He sometimes sleeps at other wives’ houses. She did not divorce him bcoz didn’t think she could manage to take care of their children alone - while also saying that he didn’t help her. But especially advising sons. Now he has changed his behavior, had grown up and gotten ill...

Hamra enrolled in FIDP tree planting bcoz told to participate by chairman of club, but sees no benefit.

Jeneti: Often ill, she says, and has sores on skin... But lot of achibale [relatives] around her, help each other: salt, ndiwo, fetching water when ill.

Nelia enrolled in FIDP Soy, mushrooms & forest, but sees no benefit. Did not receive anything after selling. Continues bcoz told by chief, can’t stop.

Balakasi enrolled in FIDP trees bcoz told so by chief. Benefit: received trees to plant in own field to get firewood. Balakasi’s ex-husband had 1 acre at Mudzi A. She did not mind losing access to that field when sending him away, “bcnz she also lost a thief.” Shared a lot of her maize with her adult children & their families/households who did not have enough food, came to beg from her.

Aisha currently not enrolled in any FIDP club. Registered for chicken and goats, but waiting for chicken club to start, or someone to fail in goat club or a new goat club.

Maria (22, left behind) says all FIDP participants were divided between the various clubs, some in mbuzi, she in mushroom.

Meriam (56, married) sees no benefit in FIDP, but continues (goats, trees, manure, soy) bcoz maybe in future there will be benefit.

Zara (28, second marriage) only participates in FIDP goats (benefit: can be sold to help HH, eg in coming days will be selling to buy food). Doesn’t want to participate in other activities kusangalatsidwa: does not get happy from participating: some get benefit, others don’t, she may be one of last...
Rashida (45, 3rd marriage) enrolled in FIDP soy, forestry, manure. “Divided into groups by chief…”

Chenawe (70, 3rd marriage) was enrolled in FIDP mushroom, but no benefit, 4X water per day, which was far…

Second husband saw Yona (1938) at Limbe Company (Chiradzulo) where she visited her brother. He asked her brother about her behavior (she had been in prison for 6 months for attacking other wives of husband). Brother told Yona that colleague wanted to marry her. Remembering about unfaithful first husband Yona doubted for 3 months, asking around about his behavior. Was told he had been married but was now divorced. “That’s why I agreed”. During those 3 months he brought soap, salt, clothes for her. After marriage stayed together in Limbe, but cultivated land in Mudzi A. Home vlg had been in Chiradzulo, Uncle/brother had gone to Balaka to find land, then brought rest of family. When he died, Yona moved to Mudzi A (1968-1974). Last born child 1974. Up till this yr still lived in the iron sheeted house built by him, till rains washed it away. Has 1 pig + 1 chicken, both bought through selling fish (stopped BS when transport costs became too high). Plus 1 goat from FIDP (2 other + 2 sheep stolen by thieves).

Alida (1953) lived with parents when she was proposed at 15 by man (18) who came from Tradingcenter asking for marriage. She refused for a month, he kept coming, giving money, relish. He encouraged her to accept, “helping each other.” Was really good husband: no beating/figting, eating together, working together on the field. He died in 1983, after 15 yrs of marriage. Had 4 children, all dead by now. Three grandchildren of whom 1 (girl) stays with her, others (boys) with relative in Balaka, bcoz she can’t manage to take care of all. Her children left her pots, tins, plates, clothes + she receives Orphan Care (1500 once a month no matter how many orphans, must go to Tradingcenter to receive, picture to check). Plus farming to survive - has 1.5 + 0.5 acre, but can’t cultivate all, bcoz ill. Will hire ganyu with Orphan Care money. Last yr one bale of cotton @ 6000MK, bought 4 bags of maize. Was not on HH list, did not receive coupon last yr bcoz couldn’t pay for fert anyway, she says. But selling? Afraid to, bcoz prohibited, maybe this yr… Plus says only in FIDP mbuzi bcoz “not written in book, hence not in other clubs.”

Kima also has income from Orphan Care.

Ms Ntawanga gave birth to 7 children within 8 years. Hence sex almost always lead to a new child – must make it a different kind of experience… Can Mr Ntawanga not restrain himself? Or would sex drive be considered god given?

Suset said in interview that she had had malungo [fever] and went to traditional doctor bcoz thought she may have been bewitched. She left school in Form 2 bcoz school fees payer stopped when she got pregnant (impregnator later married another instead of her).

Email from Gertrude [11-09-12]:
Hallow Janneke how are you here everything is fine only missing you,

now let me go back to the questions, i tried to do a little bit of research to different women from different places but every body is still telling me the same examples that i sent to you, now we can conclude it in this way, we can define it as its a belief that people from the past said when you add salt in relish while menstruating you will suffer form tsempho, or you can add the examples that i gave

the truth is that i tried to add salt in my relish when i was menstruating my friend ate the food but nothing happened, lets just help each other to find the real definition, becoz what i sent to you is what i found from different people

if you remember very well in Mudzi A and B a lot of kids are indeed weak and most of them their husband are in SA or they have other wives eg Livia’s dotta is weak she just do zibwenzi, Sofias late husband had 2 wives and her son was weak,

people still believe it but indeed they use traditional medicine to protect themselves and their children

about having sex through dreams it happens through witchcraft, there are some traditional medicine that they use to reach any woman that they want at that time

about the question of Fisi it happens but especially chewa people eg kasungu and tumbuka people but in Mudzi A and B i didnt hear any one talking about it, this happens if the husband is failing to bear children they bring another man to sleep with that woman so that she can have a baby

if you are not comfortable please keep on asking am free to answer

enjoy reading and greet everybody

Mdulo: circumcise i just remember that Jasmine was telling her dotta in law Sofia that, when i will have enough maize i will send my grand children for circumcision,

Tsempho: there are different meanings of this disease, people from the past said that when you are menstruating dont add salt in relish becoz you will affect the elders, you will make them suffer from tsepho, their bodies will become weak or have fever,

another example is that, when a woman is married and have sex outside marriage(with another man) you will make your husband ill he will become weak have fever and they call it tsempho

Another chitsanzo [example] when you just gave birth you cant have sex with your husband then the husband goes out to sleep with another woman that will affect your baby,that baby will look weak, open bowel, and the elders call it tsmpho,

i remember Livia’s dotta Hana she was weak and she said i should stop sleeping with other men becoz am affecting my dotta, even Sofia’s son i think he was weak becoz her husband was sleeping with other women,of course he was already born weak,

Last example when Desi got married her first dotta got sick,her mother called her and said your dotta is suffering from tsempho becoz after she was born you didnt have sex with her father
instead you got married with another man and had sex with him, then the medication that she told her was that she must put a string on her waist but that string should be made from the piece of cloth that she use when menstruating. I think you know that in Malawi when menstruating they use a piece of cloth and wash it and dry it then use the other day.

Kanyera: in the past when we didn’t know about Aids people knew about kanyera, when someone got sick often, look weak feeling cold all the time, becoming thin even coughing, just like how the husband of GVH. the way he was looking, people could call it kanyera

Income and expenditure tracking by Venesi: Feb 25 2009: receives 1000MK from CU as compensation for voluntary teaching. March 4: Attending the Teacher Development Committee as requested by Concern Universal, receiving 2800 for it. March 5, 2009: Ndinapatsidwa chokumwa ndi chodyera ndi bungwe la Concern Universal. Komanso andipatsa ndalama yokwana 1200 kuti tipange transposrt komanso lunch (for attending workshop). Komanso darling wanga Kamfoloma anandigulira botolo la Fanta mu Metro. [I was given drinks and food by the organization CU. They also gave me 1200MK so we should get transport and lunch. Also my darling Kamfoloma bought me a bottle of Fanta at the Metro store (in Balaka).]

Janneke: Chifukwa? [I had dried fish which I gave to chief Mudzi A and also a soap called Ufresh and also a packet of matches. Janneke: Why?] Venesi: As thanks for selecting me for CU workshop. March 30: receives another 1000MK from CU for voluntary teaching of fellow village women (although classes have stopped due to disinterest from both her and students).

April 15: Again meeting for voluntary teachers at Balaka, receives 2800MK, bottle of Fanta and a snack, 600MK for lunch and 400MK for transport. Had to spend night at Balaka, resthouse costed 300MK. Furthermore buys clothes for her children at 690MK, tea 100, sugar 270, soap 100, airtime 70, 5 bars of laundry soap totaling 150MK, paraffin 100, dried fish 100.

Money which Venesi received for attending a Concern Universal workshop (1200 on March 5, 2009) she spent the same day on earrings at 25MK, shoes for herself at 330MK, a bag for her mobile phone at 100MK, underwear for herself at 170MK, dried fish at 50MK, cooking oil at 40MK, salt at 50MK, onions at 20MK, toothpaste at 50MK, airtime at 210MK, sugar at 125MK, (relatively expensive, luxury) soap at 180MK. The next day she donated 20MK to the church at service, and charged her mobile phone at 30MK. = 1400

Venesi writes in her income and expense book that on April 7 she receives 350MK from the health extension worker to give her children vitamin and a medicine against worms.

Venesi writes in her income and expenses book on April 11 that she begged some thobwa (maize drink) from Lovely because "njala yandipota" - had an empty stomach/felt hungry. On the same day she bought eggs from 150MK, cooking oil for 40, batteries for her radio at 120MK, and phone units 80MK. On 26/5 begs 10MK from Mercy to buy aspirin because head aches.

Suset has no money on the day she starts keeping track of her income and expenditure. On that day her grandmother, living next door, buys her a soap so that she can wash her baby’s diapers. The next day, a client comes to pay the 30MK that he owed her for the beer he drank earlier. Immediately, Suset spends the money by going to the mill to have some maize grinded, and buying...
paraffin, matches, sugar cane, and painkillers on her way. Three days later, she makes MK20 by selling the maize husks that were left after she pounded her maize to the pig rearing group of which her grandmother is a member. Eating nsima with okra or pumpkin from her own field. When finding some money, buying dried fish, tomatoes, and cooking oil for nice meal. Also soap, paraffin, matches. When receiving 2000MK from me for her note-keeping, she pays back various loans, and immediately gives some money to her grandmother for soap, and sister for ndiwo. In the following days she buys sugar to brew beer, and nice food for herself (= fish, cooking oil, onions, tomatoes, salt). Her sister comes to beg soap so she can wash her daughter (Suset buys her cheapest soap), her grandmother says she craves for beans which Suset then buys for her, another sister begging tomatoes. With the beer she brews, she makes 480MK + 180 + 380, which is spent on fish, and sugar cane for herself, and bread buns to share with her grandmother. Matches, g’nuts, jersey for daughter, batteries.

On March 31 sells her radio speaker for 350MK, same days buys a chicken for 300MK, cooking oil 20MK, onion 10MK. Shares the chicken with her grandmother and elder sister Teleza. On May 9 receives 500MK from uncle to buy soap from her child. The same day Suset buys (the cheapest) soap Nirma at 25MK at Crossroads, and bosy lotions called Soft touch at 120MK, and pays back 20MK to her elder sister which she had borrowed earlier to add to money which she already had herself in order to buy batteries. On May 20 receives 1500MK from uncle. Same day buys a chicken at 250MK to keep, mutemba [dried fish] 30MK, tomato 20MK, parafin 15MK, cooking oil 15MK, also cooking oil for grandmother, mandasi [snack] 40MK, sugar 20MK, gave back 350MK borrowed earlier (May 16) from Jasmina to pay someone to build bafa, charcoal 75MK. Next day pays 200MK for bicycle taxi to Balaka, buys 2 packets of sugar 125MK for beer brewing, 15 MK salt, 50MK Irish potatoes,, 90MK cooking oil, 20MK unions, 60MK Vestine body oil, Soft touch boy lotion 60MK, fruit (manaches) 30MK, relish 100MK, batteries 80MK, gave matches to elder sister who says she does not have any. = 1645MK (forgot exact prices, or had some other money left too? --> May 19 received 100 from debt beer drinker, May 18 sold beer 500MK, May 17 sold 200MK beer). May 22 buys 15MK snacks for daughter, usipa [dried fish] 40MK oranges. May 22 receives nandolo [legume] from grandmother bcoz Suset has no relish, begs 10MK cooking oil from vender she always buys at. May 24 grandmother gives her tomatoes to put in relish. May 25 receives potatoes from grandmother, and parafin bcoz child crying bcoz of darkness, borrows ufa [maize flour] from elder sister bcoz doesn’t have own. Finds 10MK selling beer, spends it on leafs. May 26 receives (begs?) soy beans from elder sister to add to porridge of daughter bcoz hers finished, receives (begs?) snacks and biscuits from father of second daughter, receives (begs?) okra from wife of XXX bcoz she has a lot. Same days she finds 200MK through selling beer: buys fresh fish 45MK and 30MK from grandmother, 10MK tomatoes, 20MK cooking oil, gives Nirma soap to grandmothers who said she wants to wash her body, buys tobacco form grandmother, and gives back ufa that she borrowed.

On April 3 borrows a basket from her grandmother to use for harvesting maize bcoz doesn’t have one herself. At other occasions borrows bike from others (e.g. father second child - May 27) to go to hospital. On April 28 borrows tin to fetch water from grandmother because her own was leaking.

On April 5 Teleza asks Suset to buy a tin of maize 200MK from her with the money made by selling beer bcoz needs to go to hospital.

On April 7 gave 50MK to her brother to cut down a tree for her so she can brew beer with it.
On April 2 receives 60MK matemba [dried fish], 20MK cooking oil, & 2 mandasi [snack] from grandmother who always buys her something after receiving Orphan Care money. On April 8 Suset makes 540MK by selling beer, buys eggs (and sugar, bread, a plastic cup for daughtert, and goes to maize mill), gives two boiled eggs to grandmother. On April 10 Suset receives 10MK from grandmother to buy relish because she did not have money. On April 28 buys 4 mandasi for grandmother to eat when drinking tea. May 1 received thobwa [maize drink] from grandmother. On May 8 receives 120MK from grandmother which she had borrowed to buy sugar. May 9, grandmother buys Suset rice 40MK & tomato 10MK from passing by vendors.

Suset receives money from fathers of children (April 9 father of first born: Colgate toothpaste to put on wound on child's head, 4 bars of soap Ufresh, body oil Vaseline; April 17 500 - spent 350MK on goat meat; April 24 25MK parafin father last born). Does some ganyu every now and then, eg 50MK carrying maize from Kachere's field, or harvesting cotton at Mr Banda @ Crossroads 100MK April 23).

Often ill these days, and sometimes pays a girl 10MK to fetch her water (eg May 13 - but also twice before...).

On April 25 Suset receives a T-shirt saying Chifumbi for Malawi president bcoz she attended meeting.


Suset at times still receives gifts from fathers of both children, sometimes begs support, does not always get. E.g. potatoes from father of Queen on June 4 & June 11 & June 15. April 20: Jasmine gives "sopo wa Washda" to wash clothes of first born = Jasmine's granddaughter. May 22 (financial diary) calls Jasmine "mother-in-law" (who borrowed 350MK to Suset to pay someone to build bafa, paid back several days later) of whom she received 25kg of maize becoz Suset helped Jasmine harvest her field; June 8 receives 100MK from Jasmine; June 10 borrows tin pot from Jasmine becoz own is leaking; June 13 receives two soaps (Nirma = cheapest) from Jasmine. May 29 Chikondi receives shirt for one of her children from its grandmother; June 5 soap, 1 kg sugar & money for medicine from "mother-in-law"; June 13 "agogo a XXX" [grandmother of Chikondi's last born] 30MK to buy herbal med; May 11 mother-in-law from [nearby village] gives Chikondi 50MK, buys milk; May 16 receives 50MK from other mother-in-law;
May 18 receives 20MK from "grandmother of [other child];" May 23 receives 40MK from apongozi (mother-in-law) from [nearby village]. Hence lasting relationship of support also with paternal grandparents of child!

Chikondi on March 2 has 15MK balance from mother and 15MK from Julia who had borrowed this on Feb 28 to go to the maize mill. She uses the money to buy sugar to add to the maize porridge for her 3 months old twin for whom she has not enough breastmilk. The next day she receives 2 pumpkins from Mrs. XXX, and makes 100MK by picking cotton for Alida. Of this money she uses 60MK to buy two bars of the cheapest soap (Nirma, without wrap), 20MK for salt, and 6MK for matches. On March 4 Chikondi borrows 30MK from ??? and receives 50MK from the father of her recently born twin. On the same day she buys soda at 10MK, skin oil for her babies at 40MK, and takes some maize to the mill to be ground. On March 5 she picks some groundnuts from her field to sell to Mr Musitafa at 100MK. She buys dried fish from her selling neighbour for 60MK, and gives some maize to another neighbour who begged for it as she herself had none at the moment. Chikondi furthermore gives 50MK to her eldest son to take to school as payment for the school committee. Regularly borrows mtondo [from Mrs Tulipesi, Chenawe, Lovely, Hamra to pound medicine or porridge flour for babies. On May 8 makes 100MK picking cotton for Alida and sells her chicken for 200MK. On the same day she buys a relatively large quantity of parafin at 50MK, pays 120MK for her eldest son’s education, buys matches and salt for 12MK, and pays back the 50MK which she had borrowed from Mrs Tulipesi. The next days she receives 200MK from her brother and 50MK from her husband. She buys body lotion and soap at 200MK, and sugar at 30MK. Furthermore pays back 200MK which she had borrowed from Belita. Sometimes her loans with fellow villagers are repaid by husband (eg May 13). On May 21 apparently in desperate need for pain killers: begs 20MK from Alida and 40MK from uncle "for painkillers", and asks the 20MK for which ?? earlier took tomatoes.

A lot of borrowing between women (eg Venesi 15/3; P2 0387, 0724, 1248, 1328, 1597, 1832, 1870; P3 0797, 0914, 0915, 1040, 1095, 2281, 2585, 3770). P2 1232: mandasi & zigumu [snacks] obtained on tick, so delayed payments, exchange flows are disconnected in time. Chikondi 2/3 gets 15MK from julia who borrowed earlier to go to maize mill. Chikondi repays 50MK to Mrs Tulipesi May 8; 200MK to Belita May 9; is repaid 50MK by mother May 10; repays 50MK to Rashida @ Mudzi A & 500MK to Kima May 11; repays 100MK to ??? @ Mudzi A & repays 30MK to mother May 12; repays 80MK to ?? @ [nearby village] May 13; repays 30MK to Julia May 14; borrows 20MK to mother May 15 & repays loan for fish 60MK husband of Julia & husband of Jasmine; is repaid 30MK by Victoria for tomatoes May 16 & repays 15MK ??? @ Mudzi A & 10MK to Livia; May 17 gives 30MK worth of tomatoes to ??? @ [other village] & 100MK to husband of Hamra; repays bill at grocery store @ [other village] May 20; repays 50MK to ?? @ Mudzi A & 30MK to Mrs. Tulipesi May 21 & begs to be repaid for 20MK tomatoes; repays 30MK to Hamra & 10MK to grocery husband of Jasmine May 22; May 23 repaid bill @ husband of Jasmine & husband of Julia; is repaid 20MK by Hamra May 25; is repaid 30MK for tomatoes by Kima & 20MK from Rashida & pays back 20MK to Mrs. Tulipesi; May 27 is repaid 20MK by Thokozani @Mudzi A & 15MK by ??? @ Mudzi A; Suset received 8000MK from me May 28, pays back loan of 425 and loans out 120MK to Livia on May 31 (repaid on June 10), and gives 500MK to younger sister to buy soap (but gets 500MK which younger sister had borrowed on June 3...); Sofia loaned out at least 500MK of the 2000MK that I paid on March 16, repaid at March 25 & also was repaid 500MK of the 2000MK I paid on April by Alikia.

Also begging food/small amounts of money (eg Venesi ¼ - mother chief Mudzi B begs therere [okra], 25/4 - leaves from Pamela, 26/4 leaves from Molly, 11/5 - thobwa [maize drink] from Lovely, 21/5 – 200MK to Molly to buy soap, 24/5 - tomatoes from Molly & nkwanani [green leafs] to Jasmine, 25/5 - 10MK from Molly for painkiller, 26/5
- 20MK from Molly to buy ndiwo [relish], 27/5 paid back loan of 300MK with Grace (after receiving 8000 from me), 1/6-?? begged ndiwo, 3/6 asked to get ndiwo from uncle chief K [other village] garden, 4/6 taking okra for Grace’s field + 5 tomatoes from Molly, 6/6 - 20MK to begging father, 7/6- begged Molly to be taking some leafs from field (and bought 10MK tomatoes from Molly), 11/6 - taking leafs from chief K, [other village] field, 12/6 - taking potatoes from chief K, [other village] field + okra from Dora’s field - 5/3 Teleza begs maize from Chikondi & Tumanene begs maungu [pumpkin] from Chikondi; June 12 Suset begs tomatoes from Teleza and paraffin from other sister “chifukwa ine ndinalibe” [because I don’t have any] (but buys slippers at 120MK at Crossroads market…); March 5 Sofia begs 100MK from g’mother to buy paraffin (buying 50MK paraffin, soap at 25MK and salt 20MK)

76

77 **gifting of food** (eg 2/3 - receives 4 pumpkins, 18/4 potatoes from Pamela, 6/5 - in-law sends leafs, 8/5 - potatoes from Grace, 16/5 - chicken meat from Roda, 22/5 - potatoes from Pamela, 30/5 - guava from ???, 2/6 - nandolo [legumes] from Esnat + small cup of g’nuts from mrs ???, 5/6 - potatoes from ???, 10/6 - giving a few sweets to several fellow mothers)

80

81 When Dyson escorted me from Th. Village to one of the women I wanted to interview, we spoke (in ChiChewa) about HIV and AIDS. About condoms he said (what I had earlier read is often said in Malawi): “You don’t eat a sweet in its wrapper either…”

82

83 When still living in Lilongwe I used to get up early to have some exercise before going to the office. As I walked my usual route through the neighbourhood, a man once came cycling next to me. To my great surprise he – very seriously – said that he did not yet had a wife and was looking for one, wondering if I’d be interested to marry him!

84

85 Teleza: First married a lazy man, didn’t want to work in the field, therefore she decided to leave the marriage. See for further details P3 3898.

86

87 Auleria (32, divorced, 3 children, lives with mother): HB worked in town, did not provide enough (while he had a clothes selling BS – usually relatively good income). She decided that it would be better to see how she would manage alone, rather than just staying with a man who does not provide.

88

89 Molly: Man came to village staying with relative, saw her and proposed (was first to propose). She explained that she had a baby, he said he could manage to take care. Then she agreed. Was secret from God whether he would be good or not. But was not a good HB: drank beer and beat her. She went to ankhoswe t complain, but still he didn’t change, then she decided to divorce. Have one child together. Doesn’t come to help or see child. She and children stayed with her parents after divorce. Mother have money to start BS, went to Ntcheu to buy tomatoes, to sell in village. See for further details P3 4000.

90

91 Dyson brought me to a woman in a neighbouring village who made public that she is HIV-positive: she had agreed to be interviewed by me. Was married to a policeman, who died 2 years ago. Then she had herself tested and was found infected too. Has two young sons. Has a large field, but cannot manage to cultivate it all. When husband still lived, they could afford to hire ganyu workers. But not anymore. Moreover, she has not received a coupon for subsidized fertilizer. When the coupons were distributed (too few for all villagers) other villagers argued to the chief that she should not receive a coupon because she would die soon anyway, would not benefit from the fertilizer as much as others would… While she still looks healthy and strong, vechtlustig I would say.