F: So, before we start, I would like for us to play a brief game to ease our minds. This is because we won't share our names, we will use numbers. So, the game that we are going to play, we will play it for us to get to know each other better. It will help us to get a perspective about each other. So, this is how it goes, what animal do you most relate to, and why do you choose this animal? I will start. So, I see myself as a tiger. The reason for that – isn't we all know that a tiger is unique, it has stripes. So, that alone makes me see myself a person who is unique. Another thing that I like about a tiger is that it hunts. A tiger normally doesn't go with the crowd. It usually goes alone, hunts and looks for what it wants and whatever a tiger wants, it gets it. I also have that mindset in my life, that if I want something I go for it and make sure I get it, okay.

P5: I love a lion. A lion has strength. A lion is strong, and it does whatever for it to get food. So, I am also like a lion, because no matter what I want, I go after it. I do it and I make sure that I do it well for me to get it. Even if it is hard to get it but at the end, I end up getting it.

P2: An animal that I see myself as is an ant, because an ant, no matter how small it is but it does what it wants to do. It collects food while there is still time, it always works while there is light. Then when the rain comes, it hides and sits and benefits from its hard work.

P3: An animal that I see myself like is an elephant. It waits for a long time put the outcome is big.

P4: An animal that I think I might be is a tortoise. A tortoise, as much as it walks slowly but it gets to where it wants to get to.

P6: I like being a monkey. [Participant is speaking softly and inaudible] What I see in movies is that an elephant likes taking care of – there is this part where it was saving a person. So, I like helping where I need to help.

P1: Luckily, I like being a tortoise like the lady. My things in general go slowly but I fight, at the end if I want something I get it.

F:. Sometimes women use different words when talking about menstrual cycle or the days of the month when they are bleeding. Please tell me which words do you usually use when you are talking about menstrual cycle?

P2*: Ukuya eJapan* [Meaning: It is a Zulu phrase which is slang and directly translated as going to Japan] *or amaPs* [Meaning: "Ps" is a plural for the letter P. In this context Ps stands for periods].[Chuckles by participants]

F: Please can we start with *ukuya eJapan*, what does it mean?

P2: *Ukuya eJapan*, isn't with Japan, have you noticed that its flag is white and has a red dot. Mhm [Yes], so, when you start going on your periods, you insert a pad, a pad is white. It starts with by saying *cho!* [Meaning: "Cho" is a Zulu word that expresses the sound of a drop, in this context the participant is referring to the blood drop], a drop, you see. So, it pictures that. So, then with *amaPs*, it is short for my periods.

F: Oh okay, so, *amaPs*, the P is

P2: Yeah it is short for periods.

P3: *Livaliwe irobot* [Meaning: It is a Zulu phrase which is slang, directly translated as the robot is closed].[Chuckles by participants] P3: *Livaliwe irobot* [Meaning: It is a Zulu phrase which is slang, directly translated as the robot is closed], nothing passes through. [Chuckles by participants] P3: It is completely closed!

F: Okay, what does it mean when you say, *livaliwe irobot*?

P3: You see, since it is red, isn't red is for danger. Let me start here, isn't since we have hormones, first since the robot is closed, I will have moods. Even this one [Meaning: Participant is referring to her male

partner], he doesn't get into me [Meaning: The participant means that the boyfriend doesn't get to have sex with her].

F: Who is "this one"?

P3: It is the boyfriend. He doesn't get into me [Meaning: The participant means that the boyfriend doesn't get to have sex with her]. I don't even want to go to when it comes to sleeping [Meaning: The participant means having sex], the robot is closed. Nothing goes through.

F: Okay, when you say he doesn't get into you, you mean in terms of?

P3: Sex.

F: Oh okay. Okay, so, *irobot livaliwe* means two things, it means your hormones – you don't want to be with him.

P3: Yes.

F: And then secondly, it means that you don't have sex.

P3: Yes.

F: Okay, what do others say?

P1: Ukuyeskhathini [Meaning: It is a Zulu word that is directly translated as to go on menstrual periods]? When we say *uyeskhathini* [Meaning: It is a Zulu word that is directly translated as to go on menstrual periods] it is that time of the month on the dates that you go on your [menstrual] periods. So, us Zulus say *uyeskhathini* when you go on your [menstrual] periods.

F: Okay, okay. So, you call it *ukuyeskhathini*?

P1: Yes.

P5: I call it *ngisendaweni* [Meaning: It is a Zulu word that is directly translated as I am at a place] today. Nothing goes through, everything is on a stand still. You can even feel it on your body that no, you are weak.

F: Okay, why do you say *usendaweni*? What does it mean *ukubasendaweni*?

P5: It means that since *ngisendaweni*, I won't be able to galivant and visit neighbors unless if I go to work. I will go to work and come back and be on my good behavior. I won't go and visit a boy. I must be clean and take care of myself.

F: So, which other words have you heard of that other people use to explain to go on a menstrual period? I would like to know if there are words that are used to explain the days in the month where you are not on your menstrual periods, but the whole menstrual cycle. Are there any words that you have heard of that are used?

P2: Even though I don't have full knowledge, but I have heard of ovulation cycle, that it is the time where a woman might fall pregnant if she has sex during that time. I have heard of that.

F: Okay, thank you, number 2. So, what is it called? You call it

P2: Ovulation. Ovulation cycle for that time.

F: Okay. So, it is when she is not on her periods.

P2: No, it is when she is not on her periods. I don't know if it is before the periods or after them. It is just that I don't have full knowledge.

F: When continuing with our discussion, how do women usually keep track of their menstrual cycle?

P4: When I am about to go on [menstrual] periods I can feel my breasts, sometimes they are painful. There is also – what do you call it, *islumo* [Meaning: It is a Zulu word directly translated as, menstrual cramps].

P5: I have pimples coming out. I also have *isinye* [Meaning: It is a Zulu word directly translated as, bladder. In this context the participant is referring to menstrual cramps]. And then I become thirsty, it is like I could drink a lot of water.

F: Okay, all of this happens before you start periods.

P5: Yes

P3: If I am going to be on my [menstrual] periods *ngiyathandiswa* [Meaning: It is a Zulu word directly translated as to have cravings].

F: What is *ukuthandiswa*?

P3: Whatever I am craving. I yearn – let's say at that time – it differs, it is not the same thing in a month. Maybe let's say, because last month I was craving for an orange and this month, no. I sometimes feel like I am craving for a cake, craving for something. I then know that oh when I have cravings. P3: There is something that will happen because the body says that I am maturing now.

F: Okay, when you say it is maturing now, what does that mean?

P3: When I say it is maturing now, having periods – isn't it goes with a specific timeframe, when I am on my periods, I don't know how to explain it, but I become high. So much so that my body quickly becomes – I don't know how to explain it- it becomes hot [Meaning: Participant meant that her body has high raging hormones and becomes easily horny] Because even if a boy were to play with me, I would fall easily, it is easy.

F: Easily fall?

P3: Yes.

F: How?

P3: Yes, quickly engage *enkonzweni* [Meaning: It is a Zulu word that is directly translated as at the service. In this context, by service, the participant is referring to having sex] because I am hot. It automatically happens.

F: Okay, when you say in *enkonzweni* what do you mean?

P3: How can I explain this

P2: Having sex

F: Sex

F: Alright, okay…

P3: Number 2 is speaking the truth

F: Feel free to use this word [Chuckles by participants]

P3: I wanted to say it in isiZulu, and she has said it in [Chuckles by participants]

P3: You see when I go on my periods and really maturing My emotions get high! I can feel that no, it is getting there

P2: Anything can happen

P3: Anything can happen, it is up to be whether I contain myself or fall pregnant. [Chuckles by participant]

F: Oh okay…Because it is when you haven't started [menstrual periods].

P3: It is when I haven't started.It becomes hot when you feel that no! [Chuckles by participants] That's when you see at that time, it is up to you whether do or die! [Meaning: do or die in this context meant that it is up to the participant whether she has sex, or she doesn't and suffers with what she is feeling]. [Chuckles by participants]

F: I heard you mention the things that you experience but are there maybe ways that you have heard about that talk about using a calendar maybe or maybe an app to track periods. Things like that.

P4: I once had a calendar. I had downloaded it on play store [Meaning: It is an app on the cellphone which consists of other apps and allows you to download those apps] on my phone. It told me about my ovulation cycle that it is starting now. The days for me to be on periods are close. Yeah, I used to use it, but it has been a long time now.

F: How was it?

P4: It was right, and it worked for me. It helped me. It reminded me, sometimes my periods sometimes take time, you see. The date sometimes changes if maybe I went on the 11th this month. Maybe the following month, I will go on the 13th or 14th.

P2: I used to use a calendar, the actual calendar that you place on the wall. Uhm, I would count that okay, if I have started today, I would count 28 days and then circle the other days after the 28 days. Let's say I started my periods on the 1st. I will count from the 1st until the 28th and then start circling on the 29th. Because usually I would go 3 days. So, that time – those 4 days that I circle are the ones that I expect anything to happen. I then start to mind myself, humble myself and *ngihlale njengentombi*. [Chuckles by participants]

F: What does it mean *ukuhlala njengentombi*?

P2: *Ukuhlala njengentombi* means minding yourself, staying at your home and not galivanting because you know that it is close to the time for you to go on your ladies [Meaning: to go on your ladies is a phrase which means menstrual periods]. So, I don't want to go galivanting and it finds me not at home. Maybe I have gone galivanting, maybe I don't even have a [menstrual] pad, I am in trouble. It is for those reasons. If it is close to your dates, stay at home like a lady, mind yourself and come out if there is an important reason.

P5: Mhm [Yes], but if you are going somewhere, you must always have your [sanitary] pads in your bag [Participant whispering].

P2: Yes, yes…

P5: If you are on your menstrual periods, if you are going to somewhere, maybe if you know you are going to work, always in your bag there should be your pads. And carry pills for pains because you even have *islumo* [Meaning: It is a Zulu word directly translated as, menstrual cramps].

F: So, we all have the same understanding for the rest of the discussion, when we are talking about menstrual cycle, we are talking about the monthly cycles women usually have. This includes the days of the month when you are bleeding, the time just before you bleed, the time just after bleeding, and other times of the month in between.

F: Okay, thank you so much. Now, I would like you to think about how your own menstrual cycles have changed while using contraceptive, the changes can be changes that you liked or changes that you didn't like. So, there are questions that I will ask you, that is as follows: first, please tell

me about any ways contraception has changed how often you have bleeding. An example, is it bleeding that comes often or less often than before using contraception?

P3: When I started using contraceptive, my bleeding had a lot of changes, that are different.Okay, before I was on contraception, my bleeding is different as compared to my bleeding when on contraception. The amount of time I was bleeding, the way I would discover that I am ready for bleeding, and the way I bleed. Before I was on contraception, I could tell when I am about to be on my periods, that I am about to be on my periods now. I can feel the body is warm, it is hot, everything is happening, I am having cravings. I knew that dark or blue I will go for 3 days [on menstrual periods], on the 4th [day] one I spot and on the 5th [day] one I am clean.

F: Okay, and your bleeding, did it come often or less often before using contraception?

P3: It would come well, the right way.

F: Oh, it was normal.

P3: It was normal, there were no complains.

F: Okay, and then after using your contraception?

P3: After using a contraception, there was a change. I had surprises, I had to be a clean girl even if I didn't like being clean. I know that I must have a pantyliner, whether I am crying or laughing because I might wake up and there is blood.

F: Okay, did the bleeding come more often or less often after using contraception?

P3: Before I was using contraception, it would come the right way. There were steps that I could tell. On the first day, it would come out maybe a little to show that you are about to bleed. The second day, you bleed, you can see the pad getting full. On the third day, the pad is getting full. On the fourth day you are spotting, I don't know what they call it, they say it is a discharge or what, but it is brownish. This is to show that the blood is not coming out anymore, dirt is coming out. So, now since I am on contraception, the blood is not the same. It is coming out with clots; it comes out at its own time. It doesn't mind coming out nine days. It doesn't mind coming out five days, while I am expecting nine days. It is not discharging that dirt that I knew, even the change of the smell, it is not the same.

F: When talking about the blood coming more often or less often, we are talking about if maybe you went on your menstrual periods more often or less often in a month. You see that

P3: Mhm [Yes].

F: So, another person might say in a month I would start periods and finish and then when the month is about to end and be on them again. We are trying to look at that right now.

P3: Okay, before I was on contraception, I would go once a month. I knew that at a certain time in a month I am on my periods and then finish. The following month, the same time I went on, I will go on it again. Unlike this one I am on, where I am on contraception, I am expecting anything. It means that I can expect anything.

F: But if you are on your periods, you go on them and finish, even though you go on them when you least expect? Or it does happen that you go on the 25th, maybe go again on another date in the same month.

P3: Yes

F: It happens?

P3: Yes, it happens, a lot.

F: Okay.

P3: Right now, I don't know, I am like a person who is lost, who doesn't have direction. My [menstrual] periods don't have direction at all. They are not like before. They come whenever, at the time they want to, they repeat twice, they repeat three times. Sometimes you think that maybe you are spotting and tell yourself that you are spotting and then next thing it is like periods. So, I can say that a lot of change has taken place.

F: That means you have them more often, they come more often than before.

P3: Yes.

F: Since you are using contraception, but before they came moderately?

P3: Yes.

P6: I will speak about the 2 months [Meaning: Participant is referring to the 2 months contraception injection] contraception. I got on contraception when I had finished giving birth to the baby. Before, I didn't go on contraception before it was born. So, after giving birth I took 3 months [injection] first. So, it also made me bleed, maybe the whole week. I changed it and used the 2 months that I am talking about now. My 2 months saddens me. In a month, maybe I go 3 times in a month. Let's say maybe this week I am on periods. A week would pass, the following week I am on my periods. You find that sometimes I am having sex, and I wasn't on periods. Then next thing I am on my periods, but I would go for one day. the following day I don't have them.

F: Okay, before you used a contraception, would you say your periods didn't come often?

P6: I would go on them once a month. And I knew when my date is.

F: Oh okay. And then after using a contraception, you would go on them more often.

P6: I would go on them more often and I also don't know the date. And the pads that I am using are more than the ones I was using.

P2: Before I started being on contraception, my periods were periods that were normal. They were not heavy, and they were not light, they were moderate. Uhm, what happened when I started contraception, I started contraception, I started with the 3 months depo [Meaning: Participant is referring to the 3 months contraception injection]. So, what happened, not that they changed being heavy or by being light, what happened to me is that they came out with dirt. They would be brown. Yes, isn't it does happen that when you are about to finish your periods, the brown thing comes out, but it came out with the blood throughout my periods, all of them. So, the first time I did it for the first 3 months and thought that maybe it is because the body is starting and will get used to it. The second and third time, it happened until the year finished and I stopped a little and decided to wait and see what happens. So, I stopped and got pregnant. After I was done with the pregnancy I used an implant. An implant stopped them straight. They are not there at all. Since I came back from giving birth in 2021. I don't know them at all.

F: Please may I go back briefly, before you used a contraception? Your periods would come once a month?

P2: Yes, they would come once a month.

F: Okay, after using a contraception – you have used 2 things for contraception?

P2: Yes, I started with a depo, now it is an implant.

F: So, the depo when you used it, you bleed more?

P2: No, I didn't bleed a lot. I bleed normally, what changed is the dirt only. It would be there from when I am starting periods until I finished them.

F: Okay, then when you used the second contraception, you didn't bleed at all.

P2: Yes, the implant. I don't bleed at all; I don't know them.

P5: Before I got an injection, I would 4 times in a month. Maybe if I am going to start on the 15th, 16th, 17, 18. Then it will be 4 days only. And the following month, when I started getting injection, I got injected when I was still young. I went on periods for 1 month and after that I stopped until I stopped getting an injection. I stopped when I was 29 because I wanted a baby. Every time when I got injected, I wouldn't go on periods. Then when I had given birth, I discontinued the injection. That's when the periods started. Now my periods they come every day. I can say so. Like, 3 days I go on periods, 3 days I don't go on periods. Sometimes it comes out a little bit. Sometimes *amahlwelehlwe* [Meaning: It is a Zulu word that can be directly translated as blood clots] come out and it's like *amahlwelehlwe* [Meaning: It is a Zulu word that can be directly translated as blood clots] that have a lot of blood. I went back to the clinic, and they said the injection will discontinue it [menstrual blood]. But even now, it is still happening that way. But when it is my day to get injected, I get injected, then it discontinues for maybe that week. Then the periods come back again.

F: In a month, how many times to do you go on your periods?

P5: I can say maybe 20 days, I can say that. Because it varies, it is maybe 3 days, on another day you don't go on periods, on another day it is only 2 days and so forth.

F: What is *amahlwelehlwele*?

P5: It is a lot of blood; I think it is clots. Yeah, that's how I can explain it.

P4: I have never been contraception before I had a baby. When I started being on contraception after having a baby, I started with the injection for 3 months. With the injection for 3 months, I didn't go on [menstrual] periods at all. I didn't go at all. I changed to the one for 2 months. When I got to the clinic by my house, I was used to that if I got there -isn't prevented by my house, so, when I got to the clinic by my house, they didn't have the 3 months injection, and it was my time to go back to it. So, when I got back, I got the one for 2 months. I was on contraception with the 2 months one. I still didn't go on [menstrual] periods. I had to go back to school. I couldn't take breaks at school to go to the clinic after 3 months for the injection. So, I prevented using an implant. Implant makes me bleed heavy. And it was the red blood, it was the brown color. Sometimes I would spot, I would spot maybe until the end of the month. I kept on spotting, and it wasn't normal blood. Sometimes I would bleed, if I am bleeding the clots would come out, you see.

F: Okay, so, before you used contraceptives that you used, how often would your periods come?

P4: If I am going to my periods, before it would be 4 days.

F: You would be on them for 4 days.

P4: Yeah, I would be on them for 4 days.

F: In a month you would go once though?

P4: Yes, it was once a month, for 4 days.

F: Okay. And then after that would you say you would go more days?

P4: No, it was not a lot of days.

F: Oh okay. So, for both contraceptives that you used, it didn't change that maybe you end up going on periods a lot of times in a month. When I am talking about times, I mean maybe you will go on your periods this week, stop and then go again next week on your periods in the same month? Was it still the same?

P4: It was still the same.

F: Okay, so, it remained the same.

P4: And before I prevented with an implant, if I am going on periods, I would have menstrual cramps before and say to myself, "my goodness, it means I am going on periods". Now I don't have stomach cramps, but my breasts tell me that something is coming.

P1: Before I was getting injected, I would go on periods as normal. I am not a person that has a lot of blood. I would go for like 3 days, maybe on the 4th day it is light and ending.

F: And you had one cycle in a month only?

P1: Yes, I had a date that I knew when I will be going. And then when I have a baby, then I started to get injected with a depo. The depo stopped me from going on periods. But when the month was about to finish, there would be drops that you see of blood. I don't know what that sign meant because it wouldn't be periods but there would that blood that is light that you would insert a pantyliner. Every time, until I stopped. I got injected for 8 years. I gained weight, the problem is that the injection made me gain weight. I had a figure guys. [Chuckles by participants] I inserted that injected and just got this big! [Chuckles by participants] I don't know if it is because of the injection, I am not sure. I will also ask that to the nurses when they get here, that is it the injection that made me like this. My problem is that, that I gained weight after I started the injection. And the periods stopped, they were not what they were before I got injected.

F: Okay, so, before you used the contraceptives that you used, you first went on your periods, and you were alright.

P1: Yes.

F: Then you started using a contraceptive. The first one that you used, even though a little blood came out, but you would go on your periods for that time as normal and then you would be done for the month.

P1: Yes, but it wasn't the same date.

F: Okay, but you wouldn't go on your periods twice a month.

P1: Yes, I would see maybe those drops, maybe at the beginning of the month and towards the end.

F: Okay. You are using an implant right now?

P1: No, it is still depo.

F: It is still the injection, so, now since you are using the injection the difference is that you don't go on your periods.

P1: Yes, I don't go on periods the normal way.

F: Okay…The injection that you are using the now is the injection that you were initially using?

P1: Yes, I use one injection, ever since I am using depo.

F: When did the changes start?

P1: Ever since I have started using it, it is doing the same thing. It discontinued my periods and then I had a time where I would see light blood and insert a pantyliner. The periods discontinued.

F: Oh okay, so, a little bit of blood comes out.

P1: It is light because an individual inserts a pantyliner.

F: Oh okay. So, we can say that it remained the same, the only difference is the volume of the blood. The frequency remained the same because – if we are talking about the frequency, we are talking about we are talking about the days in a month, you didn't go on your periods this week and then go on your periods again next week.

P1: Yeah.

F: Even now, it is still like that.

P1: Yes.

F: So, the frequency is still the same

P1: It is still the same

F: But what changed for you is the

P1: It is the volume of the blood

F: It is the volume.

P1: Yes.

F:. Sometimes people's bleeding stops for a time while they are using contraception, have any of you experienced anything of that nature?

P5: Yes, speaker number 5, when I started getting injected, I got injected and for the first month I went on my periods. After that almost 10 years or 9 years I kept on not going on my periods. I would go once after 3 months and something small. But I never used to go on my periods. Because I got injected when I was 18. I only got a baby when I was 30. So, all this time I didn't go on my periods. Going on my periods a lot I got to experience it when I had a baby.

F: Okay, so here we are looking at if it is bleeding that comes when you do not expect or bleeding that is more regular.

P3: Contraception has changed a lot my menstrual period. I don't anticipate it, it happens anytime. So much so that before I was on contraception, I had period pains that were a sign that I am about to go on periods. Right now, it happens anytime. There is no time – how can I put it – maybe I can it is – what do you call it in English, a cycle. I can say that it is dead. Because I find myself being on my periods anytime. It is not the 3 days that I am used to and on the fourth day spot, no. Maybe it will happen that I go on periods 2 days, it happens that I go on periods 5 days, it happens that I go on periods 9 days. It is no longer the same. It [periods] don't come the same way. Even in the middle of the month it comes, at the beginning of the month it comes, at the end of the month.

F: Please may I ask, even though you can't tell when will your periods start but can you tell when they will finish when they have started?

P3: No, you can't. Even the way they come out dear; you know, this is confusing. In fact, an individual is ill. [Chuckles by participants]

F: [Chuckles] What do you mean by an individual is ill?

P3: No, let me tell you, it [menstrual blood] comes out, when it starts coming out, you can see that my goodness it is very heavy, it is even coming with clots. Then the following day a spot comes out. You relax when you see a spot and put a pantyliner. And then next it just says vuh! [Meaning: It is a Zulu expression that describes something that happens suddenly. In this context, the blood suddenly comes out unexpectedly] You are like my goodness; why is it this big! It is very big, to such an extent that you ask yourself that my goodness am I ill. I even suspect that I have cancer because I don't understand what is happening.

F: Oh okay. So, in other words you have days that you are menstruating on and can't track how many days you are bleeding.

P3: You can't track how many days you are bleeding. You can't see whether it is starting or finishing.

P1: What I can say I have noticed is that this thing of the injection confuses a lot the cycle of a woman. At the end you end up not knowing when you go on periods. The dates that we grew up knowing that we will be on periods, when you get injected that doesn't happen. So, even if you have the blood that you see you don't know when to expect it. You see, so, that's why I am saying that is what is very confusing about the woman's cycle.

F: But when your periods have started, can you tell when they will finish?

P1: No, I can't. It is something that you see now, it is here and next it is no longer here. So, you end up not knowing what is happening.

P4: I also have something like speaker number 3, because my periods, I can if maybe this month I can see spots, maybe I spotted 6 days, 7 days, that maybe on the 8 day it will finish, no. It happens that it continues, and it doesn't become the 7 days, maybe 2 weeks will finish and keep spotting. It is not that blood is coming out. I can't say that maybe the next month it will be the same thing. It will be quiet maybe the following month, the following month nothing happens it becomes quiet. And then I think that maybe it has stopped again, maybe I don't go on periods anymore. Yet another day I would see, I keep getting surprised. I am always in disbelief. [Chuckles by participants] I am always in disbelief! [Chuckles by participants]

F: But when the periods have started, do you know how many days they will last, or you can't

P4: I don't know how many days it will be for. I keep getting surprised as I have mentioned. [Chuckles]

P5: The painful part is that even when you assume they are finished now, and then go to your boyfriend. When you get to your boyfriend, *vumbu*! [Meaning: It is an expression in Zulu that describes something coming out from nowhere or unexpectedly] Blood comes out.

F: When you say *vumbu*, what does *vumbu* mean?

P5: It means that you were having sex with your partner, when you got to him you were not on your periods but when you are done having sex blood comes out. It is bad because it would have been better if you knew that okay this is when you will finish your periods and then be able to do your things. Now you don't know, they come anytime, anywhere and anytime. Even if you are sitting in a taxi and didn't insert a pantyliner, you are standing up and you are dirty.

F: Okay. Alright, thank you so much. Please tell about any ways contraception has changed how long you have bleeding. For example, when you do have bleeding, how many days does it last? Is it longer or shorter than before using contraception?

P6: You can't tell when you will finish. Most of the time I stopped it by using pills, the white ones. And since I go to the clinic and tell them when I go on my periods, I don't see them stopping. The volume decreases, maybe on another day it seems like they are not there. Then in the afternoon you see blood. And it is small and then you insert a pantyliner. The following day when you don't insert a pantyliner, you now have a leakage. So, mines they stopped since I use pills. So, if I don't use them, I don't know when they finish.

F: Would you say that the days you go on your periods are more or they were less when comparing to before you used a contraception?

P6: The days since I am on contraception are more. More a lot.

P4: They were a lot for me like speaker number 6. At first, before I didn't use anything they were small. Now I am using a contraception, the days are more. I can't even count them my goodness. And didn't buy [sanitary pads] for my periods. Sometimes you find that this thing [Meaning: Participant is referring to menstrual periods] will find me having not brought pads, I don't have anything. And I didn't use pads because they caused *ukutshabuka* [Meaning: It is a Zulu word that is translated as having a rash]. I used tampons. I didn't by them [tampons], I would insert pantyliners.

F: What is *ukutshabuka*?

P4: It is thing that becomes red here underneath.

F: Where?

P4: You see here on the side. [Chuckles] [Chuckles by participants] Here on the side of my vagina. Yeah, you see here by the thighs. That's where I would turn red. If I have used pads for 2 days, you could see that it is painful, and it is itchy.

F: Oh, it is itchy and becomes red.

P4: Mhm [Yes], I have decided to stop using pads and use tampons. I used them and became alright.

P5: I was also going to say that most of the time since I am going regularly, I am going on periods more regularly than before. So, I was using the white pills that are found at the clinic, sometimes if it was not the pills I drank water with vinegar.

F: Oh okay. What is the water with vinegar for?

P5: They stop me from being on my periods. They close my periods.

F: Do they really stop them?

P5: Yes, water that is lukewarm with vinegar.

F: Oh okay. So, you can say that after using a contraception, your periods were more?

P5: Yes, they were more a lot.

F: How many days would it be before?

P5: Previously it would be 4 days.

F: And now?

P5: Now I go on my periods anytime.

P1: I can say that before I started using a contraception, the days were more than now. Now they are less.

F: Oh okay. So, your days are less compared to before you started using contraception.

P1: Yes.

P2: I haven't said anything, maybe you like me. [Chuckles by participants]

F: I thought you had raised your hand.

P2: Not at all, maybe you like me. [Chuckles]

F: Alright, thank you so much. We will move on to our next question. When you have bleeding, how does contraception change how much you bleed during those days? So, here we are looking at volume. We are looking at if you have more bleeding or less bleeding? Is the bleeding heavier or lighter due to using contraception?

P3: You had asked how much the volume is.

F: Yes, when you compare before you used contraception and after.

P3: As I had explained previously, that before I used it, when I was clean and my mother's daughter. It [Meaning: Participant is referring to menstrual blood] would come out – which shows that it is the first time, the 2nd time, the 3rd time and the 4th time and the last time. Now since I am on contraception, it is

not showing. As I tried to explain that right now it is mandatory to be a girl that loves itself and insert a pantyliner. It is mandatory to love yourself. Because the volume will become big and heavy and follow with clots. When you are telling yourself to go and buy pads – I use the ones from [Name of store] that are R5 they treat me very well. I am scared that the tampon will get lost. [Chuckles by participants]

F: [Chuckles] Where will it get lost?

P3: Inside the vagina [Chuckles] [Chuckles by participants] I use the ones from [Name of store], they are just R5 only. When you are about to insert a pantyliner, then you need a pad. Just when you have inserted a pad, a brownish thing comes out. Then you insert a pantyliner my goodness. Just when you have inserted a pantyliner, it [menstrual blood] says, "you are lying, I am coming"! [Chuckles by participants] And it is not that it happens consecutively, not that maybe today it will come out a lot and tomorrow a little, no. It doesn't mind coming out a lot in the morning, in the evening it comes out a little bit. Then you tell yourself that no, tomorrow I will insert a pantyliner, then it [menstrual blood] disappoints you.

F: Before you used a contraception, would you say maybe the volume was it heavier, or light or moderate compared to after?

P3: The volume when I was still well behaved, it was right. I took it as for a person who is normal.

F: Normal, is it medium, light or heavy?

P3: Medium. Yes, because as I have said, if you are going to start it shows that you are about to start. It doesn't come heavy. Then on the second day, the pad will become full. Then on the 3rd day, the pad will get full maybe for the morning, for the afternoon, the evening to show that it is coming to an end, the situation you were in. On the fourth day, you will insert the pantyliner. You are comfortable and know that you are done. Unlike right now, here where you always must be ready.

P4: Mine [Meaning: Participant is referring to menstrual blood] was also medium before I used an implant. It was right. Now it is sometimes light, sometimes it is heavy, it changes I don't how. But it changes.

P6: The blood came out well, it was normal. Maybe I can say medium. Now it is heavy.

P1: The blood was well, medium. Now when I am getting injected, it is light. And when the nurse has arrived, I want to ask him that since this blood is light, won't it do damage since it is not coming. Because the blood of a woman must come out. Now, it is not coming it, is it not doing damage?

F: How has contraception changed what your blood looks like during your menstruation period.

P3: Okay, when I was not yet on contraception, I use a loop, before I was on contraception, my blood was red. Right now, my blood has a tendency of changing. It becomes think, it becomes weak, it becomes red! Red! Red! Red! Sometimes it is weak like it has water. It is weak! Weak! Weak! And it goes with dirt, most of the time. It goes with dirt and a smell. It has changed, I can sense it, yes it [the smell] was there because it is nature. For the smell to change when you are on your menstrual periods. So, now the smell from here is not the same as the one I was used to. The one from this side is strong a lot.

F: So, when you say it goes with dirt, how would you explain the dirt that you see?

P3: It varies. Dirt, it does happen that it has – wait what do they call it in English, wait the ones that look like mucus – what do you call it in English, say it dear. [Chuckles by participants]

F: [Chuckles] Say what you know, describe it.

P3: It is like mucus.

F: Do you know what she is describing?

It is a discharge! [Response all at once by some of the participants]

P3: No, it is not a discharge. It comes out most of the time when you are about to give birth.

P5: It is like, It is like water when you are about to give birth, it is gel-like.

P3: Yes, it is like mucus as I have said. I nearly spoke English and said, *those finyilas* [Meaning: Finyilas is a Zulu slang word that means mucus]. [Chuckles by everyone] That mucus…They come with stripes of blood; you see. Then just when you have seen the mucus, my goodness! Here are the clots. What do you call it in isizulu *Ihluli!* [Meaning: It is a Zulu word that is translated as a clot] [Participants responded at once]. *Ihluli* [Meaning: It is a Zulu word that is translated as a clot], yeah.

F: Okay, so, this is the dirt that you were explaining.

P3: Mhm [Yes]. And the discharge changes color. You can even get tempted to go to the clinic and say you have a disease that is for woman yet no. The discharge changes to yellow, my goodness! Just because the partner came, yet he is doing nothing. Then next thing it is brown! You end up not being sure. There are things coming out. Yes.

F: Alright, okay. And the discharge that you are noticing that it has changed from being yellow to brown is when you are not on your [menstrual] periods or is it during your periods?

P3: It happens when you are on your periods, it also happens when you are about to finish, when you are hopeful and telling yourself that you are about to finish. When you are telling yourself that you are about to finish, you are about to finish, you are about to finish!

P5: The blood now has clots, but it is very red. It is very red. When that is done, comes something like a discharge. It smells bad but then again it doesn't happen if you are not on your [menstrual] periods. That discharge doesn't come out. Sometimes it comes out when you think the periods are coming to an end.

F: Is there a discharge that you see during your periods?

P5: No, but I do notice it when I am having sex.

F: Okay, can you describe how it looks, is there a difference that you notice.

P5: It is just water that smells bad.

F: And that started when you were using a contraception?

P5: Since I finished giving birth, while on contraception and so forth, these are things that happen.

P2: Okay, what happened to me uhm, when I was on contraception with the 3 months injection, my periods were normal. What changed with them is that they came out with water that looked dirty, they seemed like water that had sand. They changed color and became brown. So, that water came out with the blood. Have you seen blood and then on the side of the water you can see that it is water that is brown. That water had a smell. Even when we were having sex with my partner. You see when we were having sex, there would a sound that says *xha! xha!* [Meaning: This is a sound of something that is sticky, watery and elastic] I could feel that no, it [discharge] was like water. There is the one that seems natural, you see. Yes. But there was water, and he [male partner] would say sometimes, "ay no, it is like you have water". You see, when we were having sex, we kept on wiping frequently. Every time we are wiping because there is this water. But after had stopped depo, they eventually stopped.

F: S, which contraception are using now?

P2: Implant.

F: So, when you were using an implant, it stopped.

P2: Everything stopped, periods stopped, the water stopped, I am okay I don't have anything right now. What stresses me is that, is it right all these years as a woman to not go on periods. That thing stresses me. But the nurses say it is normal, maybe it [menstrual blood] will come back but it is not coming back at all.

F: There are nurses that you can get a chance to ask questions.

P2: Yeah, I would be happy.

F: I just wanted to check that when you were using depo, right?

P2: Depo, yes.

F: Did you come out clots?

P2: Sometimes they would come out, all with the discharge that is dirty.

P1: What I have noticed is that before I started to prevent, the blood was red. The blood is red, right? But now the small thing that I see, it changes color. Like, it is like it is brown. Yeah, it is blood that you don't understand how it looks.

F: Is there maybe a discharge that you have seen besides blood?

P1: No.

P4: Maybe after a week I had been on my periods, there was a discharge, there is a discharge that I had, and it had a smell. It was yellow. So, I went to the clinic, and they gave me pills. But still the pills, I even finished them, and it didn't change. It only changes at its own time, then it goes back to what I am used to, the white one.

F: Can you please tell me how contraception has changed your menstrual cramps.

P2: What happens to me since I am using an implant for contraception is that okay, I don't go on my periods. But on the days where I am supposed to go on my periods, I have pains here on my lower back. They confuse me because they are not even on my bladder, they are here on my lower back. My lower back gets hot [Meaning: Participant is referring to the temperature] and becomes painful. Another thing that happens is that when the lower back is hot, I know that the lower back will go in hand with the headache. If I have a back pain, the headache follows. I then drink pills for the pain and then it stops for that small amount of time. But next time it will happen again, every month I know that if I must be on my periods, I will have pain on my lower back.

F: Oh okay. The pain on your lower back that you have, would you say it is menstrual cramps?

P2: I can say so, but I usually had period pains here in front and now they have moved to the lower back. So, I can say it is them. I can say so.

F: Alright, okay. If we were to compare before you used and after, now they are more? The menstrual cramps.

P2: Yes, they are more, and they have moved to the lower back.

P4: I had them, they were here in the front. It was – what do we call it, *islumo* [Meaning: it is a Zulu word that is directly translated as menstrual cramps]. I had it before I used an implant. When I had used an implant, I didn't have menstrual cramps, they stopped, I don't if they got discontinued or what.

P3: Uhm, mine, my periods before I was on contraception, before I inserted a loop. I had period pains. But when I was about to start [menstrual periods], I would have something like *isbhobo* [Meaning: It is a Zulu that describes sharp pains], I don't know how to say it in English. It would be sharp underneath, and I could feel that it is painful.Then I had the ones on my bladder, and they were not heavy, they were a bit light, just to hint that something is coming.: Right now, since I am on contraception, they are still

period pains but sometimes they are there, sometimes they are not there. Sometimes they are heavy, I feel pain and it is like I am doing a C section. I even use – there are pills that I use, Brufen but they are written – what are they written – they are Brufen. It is the one that helps me. P3: It is for period pains.

F: So, menstrual cramps, can you say that before you used the contraception, they were worse

P3: Yes, then now.

P6: I didn't have menstrual cramps, now I have them and they are painful. They are two, its either they are underneath [Meaning: Participant is referring to the vagina] where it is like something is poking you. And here too.

P1: I didn't have menstrual cramps before I was on contraception while growing up. I was an individual who didn't have menstrual cramps. I would go on my periods, but I didn't have pains Now I have sharp pains if I am going to have blood come out, the blood that light, I have sharp pains that I can feel, it is sharp.

F: Okay, so, thank you so much. While we were continuing with our discussion, our note taker [Name of note taker number 2] was writing on the cards to help us remember what we were discussing. Please can we look at our cards, let us review what we have said so far. So, we will start this side, how often you bleed. Some of us said remained the same, bleeding remained the same. Another individual said experiences no menstrual periods. Another individual said more often than before. Another individual said less often than before. Then we looked at how regularly we bleed. We said unpredictable bleeding. Is everything right?

Yes! [Participants agreed all at once]

F: Then we looked at how you bleed. You said more days than before. Unable to count number of days. Others said 5-9 days. Others said 7-14 days. Others said 20 days, not consecutive. Is it right?

Yes! [Participants agreed all at once]

F: And then we looked at how much you bleed. Others said light bleeding. Others said spotting. Others said heavy bleeding. Is it right?

Yes! [Participants agreed all at once]

F: Then we looked at how your blood looks. Others said red to light red color. Others said clots. Others said smell is different, it is stronger. Others said they get slippery fluid during their cycle. Others said discharge changes color from yellow to brown. Others said brown water that has a smell. Is everything right?

Yes! [Participants agreed all at once]

F: Then we looked at menstrual cramps. Menstrual cramps vary from less to more. Experiences no menstrual cramps, has back pain, feels hot and others then said menstrual cramps are stronger than before.

Yes! [Participants agreed all at once]

F: Okay, we will move on to our next question. All these menstrual changes, how have they made your body feel?

My body is saggy, and I gain weight. And when I go on my periods I feel like – I don't know if maybe I am scared, or I will have cancer. I become skinny if I keep going frequently on periods. Even though it makes me gain weight but when I see blood keep coming out it makes me lose weight and so forth.

F: How does that make you feel?

P5: You see now, it makes me feel bad. I wish it could just stop bleeding like before. It saddens me to keep going on periods unexpectedly. And I sometimes come out clots. I get scared, I don't know if livers are coming out of me. [Chuckles by participants]

F: But the body changes that you have, how do they treat you? That you are gaining weight…

P5: I don't like gaining weight, it doesn't sit well with me.

P3: It doesn't make me sad. I feel like a maiden, I now have firm breasts. I don't need a bra. [Chuckles by participants] P3: I have firm breasts, I feel alright. You see, it is treating me well. I had pimples on my skin. The pimples got removed.

F: What is the change that has happened on your breasts, I heard you mention that you are happy about them.

P3: They are firm, they are very nice! [Chuckles by participants] They were *ophaqa* [Meaning: Ophaqa is a Zulu word that is directly translated as slops. Participant is using the slops as an analogy to describe that her breasts became flat in shape like how slops are flat underneath], isn't I was breastfeeding, and they became slops [Meaning: Participant is using the slop as an analogy to describe that her breasts became flat in shape like how slops are flat underneath]. [Chuckles by participants] Now, they are full. I can wear sexy dresses! [Chuckles by participants]

F: Wait, what are *ophaqa*?

P3: Slops, my dear, they are breasts that are tired. They were tired, thin inside and sucked off their muscle. Now, it is back to shape. Now I don't feel ashamed when a boy touches them.

F: Okay, would you say they are big or small now?

P3: They are nice dear! [Chuckles by participants] You don't know what I have been through!

F: So, they are big.

P3: They are big, they are full [Meaning: Participant means that her breasts are firm] nicely.

P2: For me, the implant is treating me well. Because now I have gained a bit of weight, yet I was small and had no buttocks. Now my buttocks are big, they say have gone for a BBL [It is an abbreviation for Brazilian Butt Lift]. [Chuckles by participants] You see, that sits well with me. What doesn't sit well with me is that my sex drive has dropped. It has really dropped. I was an individual who was very active sexually with my partner. But you see now, it has dropped. Sometimes I am a bit lazy. Yes, so, that worries because the boy is going to cheat. [Chuckles by participants]

F: Why do you say he will cheat?

P2: Because boys love sex. If I don't give it to him the way he wants me to, he will go to another woman.

P1: It doesn't sit well with me because I had a figure and don't have it anymore.[Chuckles by participants] P1: You see that figure that I had, I would be shooting with it [Meaning: the participant means the figure that she had is what made her attractive to men, she would be in demand if she still had the figure] with it but now, no.

F: When you say you would be shooting with it, what do you mean?

P1: I would have been a ghost and into things, you see. Every woman likes a figure, right?

Yes! [Participants responded all at once]

P1: Every woman wants to see herself well shaped. Now, no it doesn't sit well with me, but it is a challenge. It gives me a challenge; I will also hear from the nurses what they have to say. Is it the injection or maybe it is not the injection, that's why I am still going to ask them.

F: What is it to be a ghost?

P1: It is gorgeous!

F: How have all these menstrual changes impacted your day – to -day life?

It saddens me, sex has become something that you would do if you wanted to. If you don't feel like it, no. So, that does give us a challenge because we don't know what changes on the body when you don't like having sex when you loved it. Even if you didn't like it as such but it was something that you enjoyed at that time. Now it is like you could do it when you want to.

F: How does that affect your relationship?

P6: It affects it because the boy can't behave the way he usually behaves. And you can also see that he is getting affected because you haven't seen him in a while, you come back once a month. You then get there, and you want 1[Meaning: Participant is referring to 1 round during sex] . I do 1 and then I am done. He will get more the following day. Now I will do 1 and then you want another one, I can't do that. I can't pretend because it is not nice.

F: Oh, even during the sex, it is not pleasurable to you.

P6: Whenever I am going to force myself when he wants the 2nd. When I have ejaculated, things are right.

F: But he wants to continue?

P6: Yes.

P5: You are always tired because the blood comes out a lot. It is like it finishes the nutrition in your body. It is like the nutrition is coming out, while it [blood] is coming out a lot. So, where will I get the money to always eat nutritious things, it will always come out.

F: Oh, so, you are always tired.

P5: I get tired.

F: Since you are saying you are always tired, it goes to how it makes your body feel. You feel tired.

P5: Mhm [Yes].

F: How does it impact your life daily, your personal life, your relationship, at work, all those things.

P5: I no longer get comfortable. Even when I take a taxi I must – even when I am walking, I must check myself, I don't get comfortable. Even when I am at home, I must make sure because I don't live alone. You see, even with the boy, he even asked me what my problem is. Because how I helped myself to not be on them [menstrual periods], I have mentioned that I drink the white pills or drink water with vinegar. So, I don't like to always be drinking things, I want things to be normal now.

P4: I, my goodness gracious I suffer from laziness. I am very lazy. I feel like I could just sleep. You see, I feel like I could always be sleeping. This thing of waking up. But when it comes to sex, I am not lazy. That is the thing I am not lazy to do. [Chuckles]

F: Okay, so, this one of always being lazy, feeling like sleeping, you are sleepier. We can insert it under how it makes your body feel, sleepy. Alright, and then the one for sex

P4: No, that is one thing I am not lazy about.

F: Oh, you are continuing as usual.

P4: I won't.

F: And your relationship is not affected.

P4: No, it is right.

F: Okay and then at home?

P4: At home…

F: It doesn't affect maybe your chores.

P4: They [chores] are the ones I am lazy to do. I am lazy, I used to be an active individual at home, they knew me. They knew that since I am home everything is in order, but now no. [Chuckles by participants]

P3: Sigh, the challenges that a person faces are to be clean by force. You see, being clean by force, forces you to bath. Because that thing [vagina] smells. It forces you to love yourself. I even started another thing that I didn't know of, that I heard of from *ladies' house*, that you steam.

F: Oh okay, before you continue, what is ladies house?

P3: It is an organization for women on Facebook [Meaning: Facebook is a social media platform].

F: Oh okay, what is done there?

P3: They sometimes swear each other there but they sometimes advice each other about certain things. Mhm [Yes], you see, it now forces you to love yourself and drink the right things. And move away from acid because acid has impact according to hearsays, the doctor has never said so. I don't want to lie, it is hearsays. It forces you to steam, drink cloves, ginger so that your smell becomes right [Meaning: Participant is referring to the smell of vagina]. And that forces you to love yourself, it is just that it is not easy. But because you love being loved, you must also end up loving yourself. And you need to change the behavior, the way you conduct yourself is not the same as the way you lived before. It is not the same, it changes a lot.

F: Which means that maybe what is talking about health, we can insert it on changes on the body…because the things that you drink, you are doing it for your body.

P3: Yes.

F: Did this have an impact maybe at home, your chores or maybe it affected your relationship, the changes that you experienced?

P3: Oh, because I am a person who doesn't live at home, I am independent. I have a tendency of making the rules for the body. I tell him that we won't see each other today. Because I don't like seeing him when I am not in a good position. Since I had explained, what affects you a lot is this smell. So, it is not easy to invite an individual. Here, you are here to open your thighs. You see, men gossip, he will go around saying, "that one smells". [Chuckles by participants] Yet he doesn't know the things that you are facing.

F: Okay, so, you see each other less days.

P3: Once in a while. Because I must be sure that I am clean. I must clean myself and check that I am clean. I can then go. And I must come back the following day because if I stay, I will face a lot of challenges.

F: Okay, does the smell affect you at school, or at work and so forth.

P3: As I have mentioned, it forces me now, I have even brought wipes dear, *Gyna* [Meaning: The participant is referring to the brand called GnyaGauard for skin products from a store], things that I didn't know of! You see now, financially I am affected, that's why the guys must give me some so that they can support me, since I am an individual that doesn't work. I can't go to [name of store] and buy pads, I must buy GynaGaurd, buy wipes, buy – what are those small things that we insert, pantyliner.

Yet, I knew that I buy pads for R5 and be right. Now, there are things that I must buy, that I must drink and end up…

F: Oh, so, now you have several boyfriends, so that they can buy you these things.

P3: Yes, the ones that support my goodness, they support me.

F: Okay, you keep mentioning GnyaGuard, what is that?

P3: The GynaGuard

P4: It is the thing for washing a vagina.

P3: It is for washing *inanazi* [Meaning: It is a Zulu slang word, directly translated as a vagina] for it to be in good condition.

F: Oh, what is *inanazi*?

P3: It is a vagina.

F: Right, please can we look this side and look at the things that we were discussing. We discussed how changes make your body feel. Others said body feels tired. Others said gained weight. Another one said gained good weight, pimples disappeared. Others said less elasticity on her body. Uhm, breasts became perky, fuller. Others said feels sleepy. And then we moved on to how changes impact your daily life. Others said feeling lazy affects daily chores. No sex drive affects relationship. Must spend more money buying products to stay fresh. Menstrual smell affects how often she has sex. Okay, maybe I would say please can we add on how changes impact your daily life, multiple relationships to buy menstrual products. Okay, we can drink water if we would like to drink them. We are about to move on to our next activity.

We will now do an activity together so you can show your experiences with menstrual cramps or any other pain that you experience when you are on your menstrual period while using contraception. Okay, I will give each of you stickers. So, you take a sticker and place anywhere, there we have a body, there is a back and front. So, on my right – on my left sorry, it is the front. Then on my right, it is the back. Okay, so, you will take stickers and then place them on the poster, on the front or back. You can even place it on both, front and back. Okay, you place anywhere on the body where you feel menstrual cramps or pains while using contraception. Okay, stickers have different colors, each for different methods of contraception. So, firstly, let's start with people who use pills or who have used pills previously. If there is anyone who has used pills or is using pills for contraception to raise their hand. [No participant raised her hand]

F: There is no one. Okay, there is no one who is using pills. Is there anyone who has used the injection, please raise your hand. [Participants raised their hands]

F: Okay, so, we have number 1. You can go in front to place the pains that you experienced while using the injection. [Movements of participant placing the stickers on the poster]

F: Here we are placing stickers for pains that we experienced, it can be menstrual cramps or other pain. I know that when we continued with our discussion, someone mentioned having a headache. Someone mentioned having pain at the lower back. So, you can place your stickers anywhere. Please can we have the next one who is using the injection, number 2 you can go in front.

P2: It is the same spot, can I continue?

F: Yes, even though it is the same as number 1's but you can place your stickers.

[Movements of participant placing the stickers on the poster]

F: Okay, please can the next person go in front, that uses the injection. Yes, number 4. Yes, number 5. Yes, number 6.

F: Okay, thank you so much. Is there anyone who has used an implant or uses an implant. F: I have noted you, number 2 and number 4.

4: Ay, there isn't.

F: Oh okay, you have never used an implant?

P4: I am using it but there is no pain that I have experienced.

F: Oh yes, alright, number 4 said she uses an implant but there isn't any pain that she has experienced. Thank you, is there anyone who has used an IUD?

P3: Loop.

F: Loop, yes, number 3. Is there is any pain that you experienced because of the loop, please place it.

F: Okay, so, now please can we take the sticker that is gold. A gold star and then anywhere on the body, please place a star where you felt pain bothering you the most. Where you say you feel pain the most when you are on your menstrual periods. We take one [Meaning: Facilitator is referring to the sticker] because we place it where we feel pain the most.

F: Alright, thank you so much. So, here I can see stickers. Which words do we use to describe this place on the body?

P2: It is *ikhanda* [Meaning: It is a Zulu word directly translated as the head].

Mhm [Yes] [Participants agreed]

F: Okay, I can see a sticker here, a star. What can we describe this place on the body?

P5: It is *amabele* [Meaning: It is a Zulu word directly translated as breasts].

F: *Amabele*! [Meaning: It is a Zulu word directly translated as breasts].Do we agree with number 5?

Yes! [Participants agreed]

F: I see stickers here, what do we call this place on the body?

P1: I call it *isinye* [Meaning: It is a Zulu word directly translated as a bladder].

F: *Isinye* [Meaning: It is a Zulu word directly translated as a bladder], do we agree with number 1?

Yes! [Participants agreed]

F: Okay, alright. I see stickers here, what can we call this place?

P4: Inner thighs.

F: Inner thighs, do we agree with number 4?

Yes! [Participants agreed]

F: And then I can see stickers here, what do we call this place?

P2: *Iqolo* [It is a Zulu word directly translated as the lower back].

F: Iqolo [It is a Zulu word directly translated as the lower back]

P2: Yes.

F: Okay, alright. Thank you. Okay, some of us placed stickers and said this is where we experience menstrual cramps. How would you describe, or which word would you use to describe menstrual cramps?

P5: *Islumo* [It is a Zulu word directly translated as menstrual cramps], it is like there are sharp pains like something is poking.

F: Okay, thank you, number 5. Is there another word that we can use to explain menstrual cramps?

P3: Period pains.

F: Period pains, thank you, number 3. Is there another word? Is there anyone who can explain to me between you, who placed a sticker here explaining menstrual cramps. What was her experience when she had menstrual cramps. Anyone who can brief us.

P4: The breasts were sore to such an extent that I suspected that maybe I am pregnant. Even the nipples, they are sore even when you touch them. They even had green veins.

P5: The bladder is throbbing. It is throbbing, it keeps throbbing inside. You need to drink water that is warm, maybe to decrease the pain.

P2: To me, it was like it is painful here on the bladder. It was like there are things that are pulling me, it was like it is pulling. So, it was pain that was like something is pulling.

F: I can see here that we have a gold sticker here where we said it is a breast. Uhm, the one who placed the sticker here, why do you say it is the place that bothers you the most? It is the bothersome place. What happens?

P4: They are like they are full. I don't know how to explain them. But they are like they are full. Even if you touch them slightly, the pain is a lot.

F: So, if you are on your periods, that is the part that becomes bothersome compared to other places?

P4: Yes.

F: Here, we can see stickers here. Uhm, why do we say this is the place that is most bothersome when on periods?

P3: The bladder is sore. It is like you doing a c section, like you are having a baby. It becomes painful. I don't know how to explain the pains, but it becomes painful, it is cutting.

F: And then here, on this sticker on the inner thighs. Is there someone who can explain why we say that is the most bothersome place?

P6: There on that part, it is in the middle. It is just that there [Meaning: Participant is referring to the poster] it is not well structured. So, the time you are menstruating sometimes it is like it is needles that are poking you. Let's say you can see me maybe I am standing, maybe the clot is coming out, you will do this while it is coming out. It is like you are going mad underneath. And even I go to the gynae at the hospital to check underneath, I am still going to go to a scan in June for checking. Because when they check my blood, I have nothing. So, I don't know.

F: Okay, so, to those who said – oh okay, let's look at this one here on the lower back. There is a sticker, perhaps, are there reasons that you can give us as to why you placed a sticker on the lower back?

P2: I am the one who has that problem. I don't go on my periods, but every time when I am supposed to be going, I can feel my lower back, it becomes painful. Sometimes I place a towel with ice, the way it is painful and burning. I even get scared that maybe I am pregnant. You can get pregnant and not be

aware that you are pregnant and notice when you are about to give birth. Sometimes I get scared and think that maybe I am having contractions. Maybe it is that pregnancy that is unknown.

F: So, to those who are experiencing menstrual cramps, what are you using if you have menstrual cramps.

P5: You drink *amanzi antukuntuku* [Meaning: It is a Zulu word that is directly translated as lukewarm water] only or you drink *amanzi antukuntuku* [Meaning: It is a Zulu word that is directly translated as lukewarm water] with salt, or you drink *amanzi antukuntuku* [Meaning: It is a Zulu word that is directly translated as lukewarm] with vinegar. It becomes better here [participant pointing to the bladder]. And when you drink [lukewarm] with salt, blood does not come out a lot.

F: Oh, *amanzi antukuntuku* is what kind of water?

P5: It is boiled water and then you let them cool off shortly. They must first get boiled enough and then let them cool off.

P2: What I do when I experience pain, as I had mentioned that I place a towel with ice on the lower back. Or I drink pain killers, that is what helped me.

P1: I also boil hot water and drink them when the bladder is aching.

F: What did you say your painkillers are called?

P2: They are Painblok, and the Grand-Pa also helps me if it is a headache. It also helps me.

F: Okay, to those that experience

P6: I would go to the clinic, and they would give me a Brufen but I would say it helps a little bit. Sometimes it doesn't help me.

F: Oh okay, what is Brufen?

P6: It is pills.

F: They are also pills. Alright. Okay, are there any activities that you do to avoid menstrual cramps?

P1: It is to gym

F: It helps to gym?

P1: Yeah, sometimes it gets better when you gym but not to pick up steel, the normal one where you do exercises yourself.

F: Oh okay, alright. Thank you so much. There people among us during our discussion who said when they were using contraception, they didn't experience menstrual cramps and others said they were not extreme like before. Is there anyone who would like to share with us about their experience?

P4: After I had used an implant, I didn't experience menstrual pains. Especially because before I used to have menstrual cramps. So, now I don't have menstrual cramps and that is right because my goodness it was so painful. It is better now because I don't have it. What I experience now is this thing of the breasts, I don't know, and it happens sometimes. It is not something that happens every time when I am going to go on [menstrual] periods. No, it is something that happens sometimes, they become painful and are full and I say my goodness, there we go! [Chuckles by participants]

P3: Okay, they have now changed. At first, before I used contraception, they were bearable. It is something that I could bare. Now I must drink – I have forgotten the name of my pills, but they are pink. They are for period pains and written Brufen. And Citro Soda so that I can cool off the pain. It is not the same.

F: For the next few questions, let us look back at all the ways contraception has changed your menstrual cycles that we have used and the changes that came with it. So, we spoke about menstrual cramps that we experience. We spoke about how often we bleed. We looked at how long we bleed. We looked at body changes that we have, we looked at the difference with how our blood looks. We spoke about the impacts these changes had in our daily lives. When then did body mapping, where we looked at the pain we experience when we are on our menstrual periods because of using contraception. We also spoke about menstrual cramps. So, there is a lot that we have spoken about today that concerns contraception and the pains that we experience when we are on menstrual cramps. What information did you get from the clinic or healthcare provider about changes to your menstrual cycle before you started being on contraception?

P3: When I started to go for contraception – because I didn't have a clue what I will use for contraception, the nurse explained to me. She took out 4 things, if I am not mistaken or 5. Then she explained to me about it. She also informed me that I might frequently go on periods, I might not go on periods. If I feel like I am frequently going on periods, please may I visit them at the clinic, there is help that they will give me. Indeed, I went frequently on periods and visited them and told them that my goodness! They have given me pills, maybe they are 3 now. They told me to drink them and finish them, my cycle will get back to normal. It has not gotten back, my goodness.

F: Okay, would you say that the information that they gave you was helpful?

P3: It was helpful because there is nothing that they hid from me, because they explained to me that since I am on contraception now, I might go frequently on periods, and I might not go on periods. So, they made it clear that there are challenges that I will face. They didn't hide it from me and say that there is nothing that will help to me and everything will be right. They didn't hide anything from me. They told me that there are changes that I will face.

F: Okay and the changes that they mentioned, are there any of them that you experienced?

P3: Yes.

F: Maybe can you tell us about one.

P3: It is the blood, the cycle to not be straight and my blood is not the same as before.

P2: The first time I went for contraception, I go information at the clinic. That since I am starting to go for contraception, I might change the way I go on periods. The flow might change and the volume. What they explained to me is that I might have changes on the body and that I might lose weight or gain weight. Yes, they explained that to me. And even when I went to insert the implant, the doctor explained to me that I might have a headache, my lower back, the sex drive will decrease, uhm be dizzy and moody sometimes. Yes, that is what they explained to me.

F: Okay, would you say this information helped you?

P2: Uhm, it helped me because I was informed about it. I was expecting that okay, since they had said that something like this will start happening and I can see it happening.

F: Is there something that you experienced with what they had outlined?

P2: From my perspective, I have experienced a lot. Because I am gaining weight, the headache, it is the lower back, the low sex drive and being tired. So, a lot of it I am experiencing it.

F:. Now, can we please think about all the things we have talked about today. What do you wish they has told you about the changes to your menstrual cycle before you started the method?

P3: What I wish for, the problem is that at the clinic the nurse – how can I put it – they have a way that they tell you. They have *isoka*.[Meaning: It is a Zulu word that describes an individual who is polite and eloquent].

F: What is *isoka*?

P3: How can I put it? They don't embarrass you. They are polite. They don't tell you that it will happen, that you will bleed. They just tell you that you will experience bleeding and that when you get to the clinic, they will give you pills. Everything is going to alright. Then you see that *bakushaya emvakwendlebe*.

F: What is *ukushaya emvakwendlebe*?

P3: They don't say things as they are. They are don't make things clear. It is like you see; everything is beautiful. The challenges that you will encounter are challenges that they will fix easily. Yet when you are facing that challenge, it takes time to fix it. They have different things to fix it. But when you get to her, it is like if you are bleeding, she will give you pills for you to be alright. When you get there and you are bleeding, she gives you pills. The pills don't help you. Then you come back again, then they say come back again we will give you – they make it seem like it is something easy.

F: Okay, what information would have made your experience better?

P3: For it to be better, what saw that it would help for it to be better – it is just that our government does things for free but what could help in all of this – because we have different bodies Please may I make an illustration with this, with ARVs – let me make an example with TB. If you have TB, there are stages of pills that they get you through They test you and take your bloods and see that you will fit here. And if they discovered that you don't fit here, they change you and take you to another place. So, with preventing, maybe we could first get checked which injection because we have a lot of things for contraception. Which one works for you.

P5: She has put it the same way.

F: Oh, she has said the same thing that you were going to say.

P5: Yes.

F: What is the most important information you would want a friend to know about these changes before starting contraception? What is the most important information you would want a friend to know about these changes before starting contraception?

P4: Maybe it is for her to know that the blood will just come out. Isn't she will be used to the 20th every month. Sometimes 2 months will pass without her being on menstrual periods. She must anticipate that the blood will come out. Maybe it will come out a lot or maybe it will come out a little and spot. Maybe the blood that she is used to won't come out which is red, it will come out brown.

P2: I was going to say the same thing. What she must expect – because what we see happening to every woman on contraception It is something the same for all of us. The periods change, it is either they disappear, or they become heavy, or they get dirty, or they become light. P2: So, she will have to expect that.

F: So, we have reached our last question. Please can we all stand. For this final activity, we will talk about two questions healthcare providers or researchers sometimes ask people about their menstrual cycle. I will ask you each question, and we will take a few minutes to discuss the answers. So, the first question is: When you last had a period, would you describe your periods as: Light, moderate, or heavy? So, if you say they were light please raise your hand.

P5: Please repeat the question.

F: On your last period, right, were your periods light, were they moderate, or were they heavy? Those who say they were light, please raise your hands. Number 1 and number 4, please go this side.

F: Those who say the periods were moderate, please raise your hands. Number 6 and number 2, please go to the middle.

F: Those who say they were heavy, please raise your hands. Number 5 and number 3. Yes, number 6.

F: We will start with our light group. Maybe one of you can explain how did you decide on you answer, that your last periods were light?

P1: I decide on that I didn't use pads; I used pantyliners.

F: We will come to the group for moderate, how did you decide your answer

P2: My decision, I decided it based on since I started to go on periods, my periods have been moderate, they have never been less, and they have never been more. So, since I started, since I started periods until they stopped, they are the same.

F: In the group for the heavy, please can 1 person explain to me how they decided that the periods were heavy.

P3: I decided based on the number of pads that I used and decided on how much I got dirty, how much I had to bath and change.

F: Oh, so, since you are explaining that the pads were a certain amount, would you say they were a lot? Everything that you did was more

P3: More

F: More

P3: Yes.

F: so, when was the last time you went on your last period? Those who say it was last month, please raise your hand. [No participants raised their hands] , **Those who say last month or 2 months ago was their last period.** [No participants raised their hands], **Okay, those who say it was 3 to 6 months ago, please raise your hands.** [No participants raised their hands], **F: Those who say more than 6, please raise your hands.** [Participant raised her hand] **Okay, number 2 in the moderate says it was more than 6 months ago.**

F: Alright. The rest of you didn't raise your hands, were all your periods the past month, pardon they were after the last month?

P5: No, my periods were this month, they were stopped by the injection

P5: Oh, speaker number 2. Mine were there because they are always there most of the time. But when the days are closer, when the date I am going to get injected on is close, they discontinue. But after a while, maybe after 7 days they come again.

F: Okay, so, we all agree that all of us who didn't raise their hands our periods were this month?

P6: No.

F: No. Okay, number 6 when were your periods?

P6: I think it is December or November.

F: Okay, which means that your periods, number 6 you fall between last month or 2 months ago.

P6: Yes.

F: And then the rest of your periods were this month?

Yes [Responses from the rest of the participants]

F: Alright. Was there anything about this first question that made it difficult to answer?

No! [Responses from the participants] [Chuckles by participants]

F: Alright. On the heaviest day of your last period – so here we want that 1 specific day when you were on your last periods, that one day which you can say bled heavily, how many menstrual pads or tampons or anything that you were using, did you use? Those who say they used 1, please raise your hands. Do we understand the question.

Yes [Responses from participants]

F: Those who say 1, please raise your hands. [Participant raised her hand] **F: Okay, number 1 from the light group says 1. Okay, those who say they used 2, 3, or 4 on that heaviest day, please raise your hand.**

P2: Please may I ask.

F: Yes, number 2.

P2: Please may I ask that the blood that is heavy that comes out when you just given birth, does it also count here, or it is on the side?

F: We are talking about the last period

P2: That was heavy

F: The last periods that you had, during your periods there was a day that was the heaviest than all the days

P2: Oh…

F: Yes, we are looking at that day. On your last periods, the ones we were talking about now

P2: Mhm [Neutral]

F: Mhm [Yes], is there a day that you can say it was the heaviest. On that day that you say it was the heaviest, how many pads or tampons or whichever method material did you use. So, right now I will ask again. Those who say they used 1, please raise your hand. [Participant raised her hand] **Okay, number 1 says she used 1. Those who say they used 2, 3 or 4 please raise your hands.** [Participants raised their hands] **Number 4, 2 and 3. Okay, and then those who say they used 5, 6 or 7, please raise your hands.** [Participants raised their hands] **F: Number 5 and number 6. Okay, I think we have all raised our hands. Thank you.**

Alright, so, I noticed that in the first group there was a difference in terms of the numbers in the light group in terms of how many materials you see. Why do you think there was a difference, number 4?

P4: Isn't when I am starting, it happens that on the first week it is light and then the 2nd week it is when it is very heavy.

F: Okay, but the day specifically which you said it was the heaviest

P4: On the 16th

F: On the 16th, how many did you use?

P4: I used 4.

F: You used 4, why do you think there is a difference?

P4: I don't know [Participant speaking softly].

P1: I think the way we bleed is not the same.

F: Okay, let's come to the heavy group. Why do you think there is a difference with the materials that you used on your last heaviest period.

P5: Maybe I have a lot of blood, Maybe it is because I have a lot of blood or maybe it is because the body is hot at that time. Or maybe I have an infection, I don't know really. I don't what is happening.

F: Oh okay, so, the difference would be caused by that between you?

P5: I am speaking on my behalf; I don't know about the others.

F: Okay, we are trying to get why there is a difference between the 3 of you in terms of the numbers of the things you use.

P5: Maybe the way we eat food. I don't know.

F: Okay, is there anyone who would like to add between you.

P3: When it was heavy, I wouldn't have knowledge because had I just came back from the clinic to notify them that my periods are not stopping, and they gave me pills. The time it was heavy, think it is the pills. There are pills that I took, they are white, yellow and then red. I was taking the red ones. That was when I noticed that maybe they are ones that are discharging a lot of blood.

F: How do you think someone else would have answered this question that I asked you, that how many materials did you use?

[Slight silence by participants]

F: If an individual was using another material and not pads and tampons, maybe they were using a cloth, maybe they were using menstrual cups, maybe they were using toilet paper. How do you think they would have answered this question?

P6: I think maybe another person who is using pills to try and stop them and maybe they worked on that day.

F: Mhm [Neutral], okay we are talking about here things that you use if you are on periods. The question that I asked you now, that materials that you used on your heaviest when you were on periods. Then we spoke about that it could be pads, it could be tampons. So, we are looking at someone who is not using pads, doesn't use tampons, a person who uses a cloth or menstrual cups, how would they have answered this questions.

P3: She would have said she used more then what she usually uses. The numbers were more then what I usually use.

F: Mhm [Neutral] Okay, let's say she didn't have what other people normally use. How do you think she would have answered this question? When all of you have mentioned the materials that you use as women and then she come comes with something different, how would she have answered this question?

P3: She would have said I changed frequently when I experienced heavy bleeding. It is up to you as to what material did she use to change. It up to you, if she says she changed the cloth or maybe she – but she changed more than usual.

F: Okay. How do you think someone else would have answered this question if they don't usually have materials for menstrual periods? How would she have felt? Maybe she wouldn't have been able to answer the question that we are asking?

P2: I think she would have asked to move on to the next person if the question was asked. She would have asked to move on to the next person and not answer the question because she hasn't experienced such. I also ignored some of the questions about periods. I would keep quiet, and they would respond alone because it has been a while since I have experienced periods. So, I think that person would have kept quiet and give the others experiencing that an opportunity.

F: Alright, okay. Sometimes people have a very small amount of bleeding, and they may not even need to use any menstrual pad, tampon, pantyliner or other material. What words would use to describe this very small amount of bleeding. If you were to describe this type of bleeding, bleeding a small amount. What do you call it?

P2: Spotting. [Participant is speaking softly] [Chuckles] Sorry, the word that we usually use if a person doesn't go a lot on periods and goes for a small time on periods, we call it spotting.

F: What does that word mean to you, spotting.

P2: It means that it is that time when an individual is on periods and doesn't go on them frequently, but it is a couple of drops.

F: And how can you tell when you have that type of bleeding?

P2: Uhm, you will see with – okay let's say it is your periods and you are going to the toilet to check if the pad is not full and when you get there, no. You thought you were going to get there and it was going to be full yet when you get there, there is something small. Yeah, it is something like that.

F: Okay, how do you choose whether you use a pad or a tampon or any other material when you are spotting?

P4: You can tell by your blood flow; how much blood is coming out. Then you can see which type you can use. Tampons can distinguish that if you are spotting which tampon to use. You see, and so forth.

F: Alright, for the last time. Uhm, when you have the small amount of bleeding that we are talking about, spotting. Okay, how would you have answered the question that says, on the heaviest day of your last period, how many pads or tampons or any other materials? How would you have answered this question if you were spotting.

P2: I used mini tampons.

F: Mini tampons.

P2: Yes.

F: Alright, thank you so much. We have come to the end of our discussion. You may sit down. Thank you so much for joining our discussion today. We are grateful for your responses; you were lively and responded well. Thank you so much. We will now stop the recording now. Time is 12:53, date is the 26th of February 2025, focus group C105.