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INTERVIEW WITH PRISCILLA MATSHIDISO RAMOGALE.

Dale Mckinley (DM): Okay, we're ready. First of all thank you very much for agreeing to talk with us and giving us your time, we very much appreciate it. Just for the record so that we can record it ... could you just state your full name please?

Priscilla Matshidiso Ramogale (PMR): I am Priscilla Matshidiso Ramogale.

DM: And Priscilla what exactly is it that you do?

PMR: You mean right now?

DM: Right now, the kind of work, exactly?

PMR: I am a social worker at the municipality and presently I am doing a project of indigents in the whole Emfuleni area.

DM: Ok we will come back to that at a particular point. Just a little bit of personal history we would like to get from you. Were you born in this community or where were you born?

PMR: No I came in this community. I was doing practical, I was a practical student then I was placed in the Vaal and I got married here and then I started working here, it's my first employment.

DM: This is your first employment, okay?

PMR: Yes, it is my first employment.

DM: Ok so how long have you been here in this area, Sebokeng?

PMR: From 1984.

DM: From 1984?

PRM: Yes.

DM: Prior to that you were living where?

PMR: In Bloemfontein.

DM: In Bloemfontein?

PMR: Yes.

DM: Is that home?

PMR: Yes, that is my home town.

DM: How old were you when you moved here in 1984?

PMR: I first came here in 1982 while I was a student. I was placed at the municipality and then eventually I was invited to come and work here because I used to be one of the best students and then they said I should come and work here. I was about 26.

DM: At that time when you came?

PMR: Yes.

DM: Just tell us why is it that you chose to get into social work? What was the impetus for you?

PMR: I think it was because I am passionate about children, I 'm just passionate about children. So, I work well with children and it's the best thing I do. So I love the profession because it's gentle, you know what I mean.

DM: And the formal training, just tell us a little about that?

PMR: I studied at Fort Hare, at the University of Fort Hare. I did social work and then I did my honours degree as well. Then I went to study at RAU, I was doing my diploma in Human Resources and I also studied at VISTA, I did Municipal Administration and I did Psychology as well. I was majoring in Psychology.

DM: That's quite a lot of education. How did you afford that?

PMR: No it's just that I like reading, that's my hobby so every time I don't want to miss a year, I can't just miss for a year and do nothing. I see it as a waste of time, so I studied this and that, just to...

DM: Did you receive bursaries to go to do this or did you have to raise the money yourself?

PMR: No, I used to ... at my work they normally get a loan, But then if you have passed the course that you are doing you don't repay the loan. So, it was easy for me.

Ahmed Veriava (AV): And just you know ... the thing is that often, especially with females in township communities and so forth, they aren't encouraged to go to university and study further. How is it that you became ... ?

PMR: You know my father was a lecturer at the University of Cape Town. So we are all girls at home except for one boy. That was the root, you do it or don't do it. That's how everyone of us at home had to study to get a degree , you wouldn't just go anywhere without getting a degree. So the four of us at home we all went to school and we got our degrees, all of us. So it was the culture in my home.

AV: You were strongly encouraged?

PMR: We were strongly encouraged by both of my parents because they had education, both of them.

AV: And your dad what was he lecturing in?

PMR: He was the lecturing of Criminology at the University of Cape Town and then moved to the University of Zululand still lecturing Criminology and later he went into Politics.

AV: And your Mum?

PMR: She was a teacher. She has always been a teacher and she was the principal at one of the primary schools in Bloemfontein. But unfortunately both of them they died in 2003 and 2005.

AV: I'm sorry.

PMR: It's life.

AV: And when you were in high school did you always want to do social work?

PMR: I remember when I was doing, they say it's grade 9, I say it's Form 4 - I remember I liked social work. I just picked up an address from one of the magazines and I wrote this letter to a social worker that I didn't even know but I knew that she was somewhere in the Transvaal, it was then the Transvaal. And I just wrote this letter I wanted to enquire about social work, the advantages, the disadvantages, I just wrote a letter and posted it. Fortunately she wrote back and you know, when I was placed here in the Vaal Triangle - we used to call it Vaal Triangle - I got a job here and I went to the first conference - I was a qualified social worker then - and I met this person. It was just a coincidence, I realised that this person is the very same person that I wrote the letter to some seven years ago and I said I'm going to approach her. And I said, are you Mrs Peloyagae and she said yes and then I said you know, I am so and so and I only know you because I wrote a letter and I still have that letter. And you know, we got along and she was my mentor. And she's still my mentor because she is still a practicing social worker, although she is old now but she still practices social work. I just love it.

DM: So when you arrived here as a young 26 year-old woman at the time in the Vaal Triangle ... you arrived at a particular time when a lot of things were going on. Tell us a little bit about what was it was like to arrive here in that early '80s period?

PMR: I remember when I was called in. I started to work on the 22nd February, very odd, it was a week before people were going to get their salaries and I was scared but not that scared because I used to do practical work there. Then, you know it was, remember the old thing I used to work only in the black community and willing to assist people from town, and I was scared you see. When I got my first cheque I always remember that I was so excited and I got R431, that's a lot of money, and I said heh! ... You know the dynamics here, because now it was the Orange/Vaal it was a big '*Stadsrad*' and three-quarters of the people who were working here were white people, but my manager then, he was very understanding - I think he was, I want to say he was a literate white and then he was very gentle, he was very understanding and he was treating us with respect. So there were not much hassles there because he used to treat us with respect. But then came 1985, because I started working in 1984, and then came September 3rd. I remember I was on leave then and I had my first child and here comes the uprising, it was for the first time to see that havoc. You know that day, I took my baby - he was very tiny - I'm sure he was 11 days old and you know I fled until I got to Bloemfontein that day. For the first

... I was seeing violence for the first time because I came from the Free State and it's a very quiet place, Bloemfontein is a quiet place, and I was here with rowdy people ... I never thought I would still be working here but you know we get used to it. And then I came back and I said heh, I have to acclimatise to this situation and I did.

AV: How long did you stay in Bloemfontein?

PMR: I had an advantage because I was on leave. I was supposed to have stayed 3 months and I stayed for 6 months. I thought I'm not going back there, there is no way that I'll get back to the Vaal Triangle. But, you know in time you get used to it. Eventually I came back, I came back and then I was charged for absenteeism for 3 months and I told them I was scared, you can fire me if you want to but I was scared, I'm still scared. So you know ... I didn't get the salary for about 3 months. I had to accept it because I wasn't at work.

DM: On the personal side, you said you had your first child at that same time?

PMR: Yes.

DM: So you had a husband?

PMR: I was married already.

DM: So you married before you came here or did you marry after you arrived in this area?

PMR: I was married while I was doing my practical work.

DM: When you were doing practical?

PMR: Yes. But when I fled I took my baby along and said I'm not going back there.

DM: Did you leave your husband here?

PMR: (laughing) Ya, no it was not my problem ... my problem was my baby.

DM: What was your husband doing?

PMR: He had a business then. I said I am going back home, my life and my baby out of that place because I said they are used to that kind of life, I wasn't used to it.

AV: Is your husband from the Vaal?

PMR: Yes he is.

AV: So you met him while you were doing practical?

PMR: Yes.

DM: Okay. So when you came back and sort of decided okay, I'm sticking around ... Tell us a little bit about the work that you did at that time?

PMR: Because now they had burnt the whole area, especially our offices, we had to squatter in the hostels. We would go to the hostels and squatter there to make our offices. And then we have to ... you know in the aftermath of the whole thing it was social workers who would go where there were children left there, there were people who were

displaced, you know what I mean. But then we had to run this way or that way and there was this political confusion that when you assist that group, this group will be saying this and that ... it was just something but you had to remain neutral, you as a person because of the kind of work that you are doing. And yet there is no way that you can be neutral especially as far as politics are concerned, but we tried as much as we can to be neutral because now when you assist this group you could be seen as affiliating to that particular group, you know those kinds of things. So, we got used to it and we said we are social workers - politically we are not affiliated to any organisation - ours is to assist wherever we can but we did it with very little support from them. Because now it was sort of ... people were giving hand-outs, it wasn't like people they wouldn't initiate - we were not allowed to initiate things to assist people with the hand-outs, it didn't work. But now with the current changes that came along, you know for people the face of social workers was changing gradually because now the hand-out thing, it didn't work because people were relying on social workers, they wouldn't take initiatives on themselves - you get what I mean. So then we had to change that and with the changing environment we had to change as well. It's something different, it's very different from the way we used to do it, very much different.

AV: Although publicly and in terms of what your work was, you had to show some sort of neutrality. But personally how did you understand what was going on and where did you find yourself gravitating towards?

PMR: You know sometimes you'd be in conflict because you wouldn't know what to do. The next thing tomorrow is this thing, the next day is the other thing then you are in conflict with yourself you know what to do but I cannot do it because I would be portrayed as this, you get what I mean. So it was very, very difficult. It became better, I think I have to say with the democracy that was coming in, at least it made sense to some of the people because now people they know that I assist them but I have a right to affiliate to whatever organisation that I want to. Then, it's much easier ... even the way we were doing it during the old days. That's why I'm saying it wasn't helping people as such. You know, they always say you must teach a person to fish not to give a person a fish. So that's why, with the changing environment it becomes different and its more enjoyable now than before.

DM: I wanted to ask you ... you said when you came back all the offices were burnt and you had to squat for awhile. Now clearly, some sectors of the population saw any government department as being the enemy? How were you perceived as workers, as government workers, after that period of time providing a social service? What was your reception in the community generally?

PMR: I think you know because after work you have to belong, you have to be seen as belonging to ... not being part of the enemy. Then you have to be part of the groups and then you have to go there and be with them, you know what I mean. Because now when you just isolate yourself then people start seeing you as the enemy. Of course, we were seen as the enemies but now they knew that the kind of help that they need they will get it from the social workers. I think because we were seen as the profession that helps people maybe it kept us going because now they knew that if I'm hungry I have to go to social workers. But they wouldn't see it as something that comes from the government I don't

know, but you know how people are. But now, because we were working with the government offices then we were enemies at sometimes. It was very difficult. I remember one time it was during the Inkatha thing, I can't remember which year was that.

DM: You are talking about later on, in the early '90s?

PMR: Later on ja the early 90s. I remember there was this issue of the Madala (hostel) and then there were people who were displaced. Some people were abducted and they were placed there at the Madala hostel and they needed food, they needed everything. We said we are serving the community regardless of whether they are Inkatha or whatever, we had to serve all the communities and we took ... I remember there was this white lady that we used to work with and she was very arrogant and stubborn and she said no Tshidi this time we are going to penetrate Madala and I said they are going to kill us. Then I said we are serving the community and we went there and I have never been that scared. We thought nobody saw us and go during the night and supply food and whatever to those people because we understood that they were people who were being abducted from the communities and they were placed at the ... and all evil things were done to those people so they were helpless. We said we will go during the night and we had the backing of this other advocate I forgot his name, we said we would go during the night we went there during the night and we gave them food. And, you know what, word spread out that we were there and there was this meeting that was called. I was so scared that day ... I said they are going to burn my house. In that meeting the word had gone out that we had been assisting those people. So a good Samaritan, somebody with some good sense out of these people, some body with good thinking will come out ... and then this guy said but those people who were fed at the Madala hostel are the very people that have been abducted so we were supposed to assist them. That guy took us of the hook and I said I will never do it again and I didn't.

(Break ... turning down the television)

DM: Now you've already just given some indication of how things began to change. I'm interested in ... as the political changes began to happen, particularly from 1990 onwards, negotiations started ... how did that affect your work and what kind of changes did you begin to see as the political scene began to change in the country?

PMR: Like I have said with the changing of the political climate we had an association then .. a forum for all the social workers countrywide ... fortunately it's where we got our strength and our encouragement because we used to meet monthly and discuss the issues. Then we just said okay, with the changing political climate, changing environment we had to change as a profession as well, the way we used to do things has to change. Because, the environment was changing then we had to acclimatize to the changes. Fortunately we were going along with them, we were acclimatizing with them it, but it was very, very difficult because some people they don't want change, they are comfortable in their own comfort zones. So, we had to acclimatise to the political changes, we had to know what is going around and then we had to change as gradually change but it was very, very difficult. But eventually the mindsets, our mindset and the perceptions they also changed as we went along. So it's very, very different from what we used to do because now people they know that they had also had to acclimatise.

DM: Just give a good example of the kind of change that happened in one area of your work?

PMR: You know even like I am saying ... prior to, let me say during the apartheid times, social workers were perceived as the profession with handouts, you know you go there when they see you they see somebody who is bringing them food, somebody, people not wanting to do something for themselves. We have run away from them, we are saying hey, we have got a problem, come and sit with us and tell us how are you going to solve that problem. Ours is to assist you to solve your problem not us solving your problem, you get what I mean. You have to take initiative, it's your problem, you have to take initiative and we will only assist where we can.

AV: In practice, what would an example of that be? Like, for instance, food parcels – would you no longer give out food parcels?

PMR: We are saying you are hungry we know that you need food parcels, basic care, you need whatever. What is it that you are going to do? Okay, you are hungry let's go you are not ill, you are not handicapped how are you going to provide food for yourself? Okay, let's come and do food gardens, you get what I mean. We have to participate we had to do food gardens because we can do ... some people we have got space in our yards, we have got land in our yards but we are not making use of that, then you come and tell us you are hungry. What are you doing with that space? Why can't you do a food garden for yourself, we will assist you and show you how it's done. We will supply you with the things that are needed but you have to do it yourself, do you get what I mean? Initially, when people are hungry we used to come with food parcels and give them food parcels without them doing nothing.

AV: In this area what would you say the main areas of your work are?

PMR: People are unemployed, that's the priority number one, people are unemployed. And when people are unemployed, people are hungry, there is a lot of poverty.

DM: Just to step back from that, we'll come to the present. What is the fundamental difference that you have seen in the social make up of the community, let say in the '80s versus the '90s and after the changes began to take place? In other words the needs, did the needs change along with the times, or were certain things consistent?

PMR: There is more unemployment that it is used to be. A lot of people are. That's why I'm saying a lot of people are not working and there is more poverty than before.

DM: What has that meant for ... how have you felt that practically in the work that have been doing as a social worker? In other words, I'm interested to know, like after 1994 in particular, once democracy came and the new government was there a qualitative shift in the way to answer those new needs or in the way you did your work? You indicated that there was proactive in trying to get people get involved in doing things for themselves but did you find the institutional support to shift after '94 to address the new needs in the community, the greater unemployment and other things?

PMR: After 1994 people were encouraged to do things for themselves. Now ... the government is making monies available but now they make monies available but they

don't monitor - that is a problem and people they misuse funds. They do all sort of things but there is no monitoring. They give out funds to do everything but the monitoring is not there. Every body will just come with a proposal - people are encouraged to do proposals - they come with the proposal, but now they get the funds and that's it, that's the end of it and the funds are misused. So, there is no commitment from our people - as long as they get the funds and get their own, there is no commitment - people are not committed. So there is a lot of truancy, there is a lot of truancy. Sometimes I would say it was better during the old days and it is not nice to say that but people were honest, people were honest and people were working. You know, I'm doing this indigent survey. I'm collecting a register for the indigent people in the Vaal area and I had 37 000 applications from Emfuleni only, 37 000 applications. I do door to door verifications. Each and every day I come across children who are left in their homes, the parents are deceased, they are hungry. You won't believe that I meet people every day who go hungry for three days and I'm not exaggerating. When I knock at the door, I say how you are surviving and they say we have been hungry for three days, we haven't got food. You wouldn't think it's a reality in an urban area like this but it is a reality. People are unemployed, a lot of people are unemployed. They are unemployed, they stay at home and what is it that they do - they just sleep because they are hungry. So that is why we get more HIV/AIDS cases because people are not working - the only thing that they can do is to sleep ... there is a lot of poverty in our area, a lot of poverty.

AV: Can I ask you a question and I mean maybe you don't have figures and stats for this - but in your opinion, what is the reason that there is such a massive increase in unemployment in this area?

PMR: I think it's because of we don't have a lot of companies in our area and there is a lot of people who are not skilled at all ...

AV: But just comparing with the 1980s, is it that there are just a lot more people now in this area or...?

PMR: I wouldn't say they are a lot, but the companies are retrenching people, a lot of companies are retrenching, more jobs are not created. The lot of companies are retrenching and when they are retrenched there is no where for those people to go. They just sit at home and some will say we will start a business and then its ends up nowhere ... I wouldn't say there are more people as such. I wouldn't say the people who are coming from other countries have increased our population. The very South Africans are not working because there are no jobs in our area.

DM: Now I was interested to know about your own position ... I know you have been working for a long time and I'm sure your job description ... has it changed as well, have you moved in terms of your own career and the positions that you have held in terms of social work over the years or have you remained doing much the same kinds of things?

PMR: At the moment I work in the finance department because the indigent programme has been placed in the finance department. Initially when it was placed there it was because it was more of collecting the money from the communities than assisting people. So it was a blessing when they said we should go and assist with that programme because we were saying, yes we have identified those people who can not pay, yes we have

collected the money from those who can pay, so what is the municipality doing for the people who are unemployed who are indigent? We categorise them into two categories: we say there are destitute indigents and indigents. The destitute indigents are those who don't have a cent. So we are saying to the council, we are social workers we cannot be going to those communities and identify ourselves as social workers and doing nothing after that, saying why don't you pay the rent. What are we doing for those people who are destitute? So we came up with projects like hydroponic project and we said okay, those people who are destitute come and work here because we are sure that they would get food, although they don't get the money but they will be getting food. And then we say those who are able to work but are not skilled we liaise with SETA (Skills Education Training Authority) and bring them together and say okay, here are the people we have identified them, give them the skills so that they can be employable.

AV: And just in terms of your own work have you seen, post-1994, more room for advancement within government than for example, in the 1980s?

PMR: Yes there is, but people need to be proactive. That's why I'm saying people are not too much committed, they still have the old mentality where they want to be spoon fed. But if you go to the people and sit down and discuss these things, they come out of this old mentality. With our new government, there are a lot of things that people can do ... there are a lot of chances that the government has created for people – it's just that other people are not aware of the things that they can do to help themselves.

DM: On that front ... you said you had 37 000 applications for indigency. Do you think that's an accurate reflection of the indigency in the community?

PMR: It's too little.

DM: Would you say twice, a half or a third? How would you describe the level of indigency in this community from your experience ...?

PMR: In the area that I am working I was at 65%. There is a 65% probability of indigency in our community.

DM: Okay, so it's probably quite a lot higher than that number?

PMR: Yes, it is.

DM: And you are putting that down to the fact that a lot of people just don't know about the process of applications ... in other words, people don't know that they can do these things or that they can apply ...?

PMR: People they have been told. We made a campaign and then people were told to come and apply. But believe you me, it was just a third of the people who came in - those who heard. The way the message was brought to the people ... we have got ward committees - then people were informed in their respective wards, they were informed about these things but people don't attend meetings, they don't go to meetings. You will find that they are 20 people in a ward of 5 000 people, people don't attend meetings. People don't want to hear I don't know ... when you say there is a political meeting somewhere people don't ... When democracy started they were there like this (clicks fingers several times) ... but I think because of the way our government has been

functioning, people have just lost hope, so they don't attend meetings. So you find that three-quarters of the people don't know what is going on.

AV: Just in terms of the indigent policy, just to kind of understand how it works. I know for instance in Soweto the indigent register, when you sign on to it they scrap your arrears and they get you to sign onto pre-paid systems, is it the same for the Vaal?

PMR: It's not, it's not the same. They just scrap their arrears. They are supposed to provide them with free basic water and electricity but up until now they are confused, they don't know, our municipality is still confused. We still have a lot of problems with our indigent register. We are responsible for identifying the indigents - for three years we have been doing that. Up until now the statistics are lying there and nothing has been done about it.

AV: And so would certain kinds of people not be getting the free allocations of the basic services?

PMR: Yes they are not. It will be myself who is getting all the privileges and my neighbour next door is not getting anything. We have been complaining about that ... our administration is not up to standard.

DM: I wanted to ask you. You mentioned in the local office you work with, you are saying people ... there is a lot of absenteeism, they don't seem to take the job too seriously whereas in the past there were people willing to work ... Why do you think there's been that shift in terms of people's work ethics ... ?

PMR: You know in the olden days there is to be strict rules. The rules were strict and people would adhere to the rules. Come the post apartheid era with our rights and people they misinterpret our rights. I wouldn't say we have got too much rights but I would say people misinterpret the rights that they have. Because now people, we are so relaxed - people are very much relaxed, it's not like it used to be.

DM: And you are saying that because there is lack of pressure?

PMR: There's too much rights, there's too much rights.

DM: And tell me ... you have mentioned malnutrition or lack of food. What are the other key social problems that you would identify in this community?

PMR: We've got a high level of HIV/AIDS, shoo ... we don't even talk about it anymore. It's poverty, it's HIV/AIDS, it's unemployment - those are the three key problems in our area - a very higher rate of those.

AV: And as your department what is your approach to HIV/AIDS? What is the kind of thrust of your programme around HIV/AIDS for the Vaal area?

PMR: In the area there is a unit that is catering for HIV-AIDS for the whole area. But they are not getting it you know, they are not getting it you know. Because I think you remember when the President said HIV/AIDS goes hand in hand with poverty - we were angry then, we didn't understand it. But now I'm saying maybe we misunderstood what he said, because now I'm saying the people are hungry, they don't get food and all they

do is to sleep and sleep and sleep. They end up infecting one another. So we have to get people out of poverty, then maybe something will come out it.

DM: So it affects the behavioural conditions...?

PMR: Ja but...

DM: To what degree ... you know national government has put quite a lot of emphasis in the last several years on integrating different services - that one department is talking to another, one programme overlaps another so that social work is not divorced from health, health is not divorced from infrastructural development . Do you feel like when you are working here in social work that you are working in some little island over there or do you feel part of a bigger effort?

PMR: It has changed now because now. I cannot be working as a social worker alone. I need a health person, I need a financial person, I need everything. In our municipality we are trying to work together because we need each other. We are saying in the electrical department for instance, we need a health person, we need a social worker ... we need to be together because we need one another. So we are trying very much to work together, not to work in isolation. There is no way that we can work in isolation.

DM: You have provided both some positive and some negative developments that have taken place. As a person , just taking yourself out of your job, as a social worker ... but as a resident. When you look at things, your own family, your own neighbourhood - how do you feel about the situation in general, the situation around you?

PMR: There are not much changes as such. But I as a resident I have also to be proactive. When I go to the municipality, I say I'm here as a resident, not as an employee. I am demanding ... my street is not clean. I always go there and complain. I say hey, my area is not clean, my street is not clean so I pay the municipality, I don't owe the municipality. But I'm saying as a resident, I have to be proactive, you have to take care of your own environment and then you have to be proud of your own environment. If we are not doing it who will do it for us?

DM: What are your attitudes - in the last two to three years in particular – you know a lot of community residents getting angry and protesting around basic services. What do you think about that as well?

PMR: I join them if they are right, I join them. There was a heap of rubbish which was dumped there (points outside her house) - which was there for years and years ... I also called the media and say come, there is a story and then they went there. I am not afraid, I did it as a resident. You can dismiss me if you want but firstly I'm a citizen, then I'm an employee.

AV: Do you feel at all under pressure within government in order to be ... like for instance you are saying you called the media around the problem of dumping here and so forth. Sometimes in government, do you feel under pressure to represent government policy regardless of how you personally might feel?

PMR: No, but if you are in the community, if you are staying in this community then I must be first be seen as a citizen before I am an employee yes but I must be first be seen

as citizen then we get the problem, especially us employees of the municipality ... if we say people are complaining they once toyi-toyed and they went to the municipality because they were not happy with the services that were rendered here. I stay with them so I had to join them. I didn't want to be seen as a government person because I always feel the pressure down here. But it conflicts, it becomes a conflict because now we will be accused of inciting people. But the reality of the situation is that if there are no services, there are no services. I am a resident and I'm entitled to services. I go to the meetings and I say I'm here as a resident. Sometimes they would say no, Mrs Ramokau you don't have to ask that question because you work for the municipality. I said heh no, I'm not a municipality, I am a resident. So you know, get that that kind of a problem.

DM: I want to ask you about something that we left out, social grants. In the last several years a lot of social grants has been introduced, since 1994, child care grants, disability grants, a whole range ... First of all, how does that intersect with your work and what do you think about the grant system?

PMR: You know if I were the Minister I wouldn't give out the child grants because they have created a lot of dependency. R180, it's R210 now. They have created a lot of dependency and there are ... yes, there are children who are benefiting from the grant but the majority of the children are not benefiting from that. I mean the very ones that are getting the grants, it's not used for what it's supposed to be used for. It has created a lot of dependency and it has created more babies in our area, because if a person is not working she just gets a baby and she gets R170, she gets a RDP house then it's fine. But it's not solving the problem.

AV: And just on the grants issue. We met with a herbalist yesterday and she was saying that people who are HIV-positive sometimes allow their CD count to go down to get the grant?

PMR: Ja that's what they do. They don't take medication because they want the CD - they are not working, they are unemployed so there is no source of income - so they would just let their CD count go down or you get a doctor who would say your CD count is down, then you will go and apply for a grant.

AV: So do you think that there are people who are not taking ARVs, now that there is a roll out, in order to keep getting the grant?

PMR: Ja there are. I also work in the clinic I know. They tell me right in the face, say to me, if I take those tablets and my CD count is a little bit up are you going to give me money for food. So how would you answer that? I say okay, it's your life. But that is the reality of the situation, they don't take their treatment because they want the grant.

DM: So given these things what would be ... you said if I was a Minister I probably would not give the grants ... but not only the grants but in terms of social welfare you have identified high unemployment, huge HIV-AIDs problems, all these things. You on the ground, people on the ground often know what is going on much better than those sitting in the offices. What would you think needs to be done to try to address this, over time? Obviously it cannot be an immediate answer necessarily, but over time, what kinds of things do you think need to be implemented?

PMR: If you can create jobs for people, people must have a sense of pride. Because when you earn money you know that I have worked for this money. They must have a sense of pride. If we can just create jobs for people, I think everything will be in order.

DM: Okay, so productive employment?

PMR: Ja if we just could create employment for people.

DM: And just more on the personal front ...you have a nice home. I'm sorry, I didn't ask how many children you have?

PMR: I have four.

DM: You have 4 children?

PMR: Three boys and one girl.

DM: And your husband is still here with you?

PMR: Yes.

DM: How was your own family life, how have things gone for you on the personal front, not just the work front, over the last several years?

PMR: Because I have got boys only...

DM: Four boys?

PMR: Three boys and a girl, so it's a care free life. They come in, they go out. I say hey, we are all here, we must keep our space clean, everyone has his own room and you don't go out without cleaning your own room. I'm not going to do it for you – the only thing that I will do for you is to cook. But sometimes it's very difficult because I'm the bread winner and then I have ... my boys are at tertiary, all of them and then the other one is working, the three kids are still at school, its very difficult. But I'm managing but how, I don't know. But I'm managing.

DM: So you have imbued educational thinking in your children as well, like your father did in you?

PMR: Ja you see all these books here, it's always like this. I say heh, it's time to read There is no one who will get out of this house without doing something for himself - a career or whatever. I say hey, I will give you a career and then we part ways.

DM: And all of them ... haven't quite yet gone off on their own yet?

PMR: It's only one who has gone out on his own. The other one has just finished school, he has done IT. I'm stuck with the two.

DM: And you said you are the bread winner. How are your conditions of employment and how have they changed over the years in terms of salary, benefits, those kinds of things.

PMR: Because I was reading, I was climbing up. Maybe that's how I got .. because when I see a job I go for it. When I see something I would say heh, I'm going for that post. But I'm still working at the same municipality.

DM: But you are generally satisfied with your conditions?

PMR: I am, I love my job very much.

DM: Do you belong to a union?

PMR: Yes.

DM: Which one?

PMR: SAMWU. (Laughing)

DM: Yes, SAMWU, we know it well.

DM: Has that union membership benefited you or not, or is it just something that you feel like you had to do anyway?

PMR: Yes sometimes it did (help), when I was fighting with the municipality. Because of my conditions of my services I used them and I benefited.

DM: Last question we have for you. What would you like to see happening in the future, both for yourself and your community, I mean generally? I think you've mentioned a couple of things but if there's anything you haven't mentioned ... ?

PMR: Our environment is not very clean. If I could see the roads being done, everybody having a job, then I think we'll have better living conditions.

DM: Thank you very much.

AV: Is there anything that we didn't ask that you would like to add?

PMR: No.

DM: Thanks again, thank you very much for your time.

PMR: Thank you.

MINUTES - 53:14