

# Traditional midwifery and indigenous knowledge messages

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# Introduction

- Global and national trends of maternal health research have shown that indigenous knowledge and recognition of positive cultural practices are to be acknowledged if the health sector need to improve.
- From where we stand it would seem as if everything that comes from the African perspective lack knowledge and understanding.
- Urbanisation and globalisation are trends that have direct bearing on the topic indigenous knowledge and positive cultural practices.
- African traditions has something to offer to midwifery, a profession that started in the garden of Eden

# I would like to do some bracketing

- I am an African woman - my womanhood is dictated by the position of women in my society
- I am not less of a woman because I was born a girl child in Africa
- I embrace the fact that I hold a very important position in my culture that of:

a woman,

a wife,

an aunt,

a mother

a grand mother

# The African life span of a woman

- A girl child is born and is announced and soon there after they start to prepare you for child bearing “ a huna pfene li no fa li songo gonya luwa”
- You will attend some “musevhetho” and after menache “vhusha”
- There you are prepared for relationship with people of the opposite sex
- You will later be prepared for courtship “ Domba”
- There after prepared for rearing your children “ tshikanda”

All these were rendered non functional due to civilisation that attempted to erode the foundation of bringing up a girl child

# Indigenous health knowledge systems/ traditional health

- The World Health Organization (WHO) defines traditional medicine as "the sum total of the **knowledge**, skills, and practices based on the theories, beliefs, and experiences **indigenous** to different cultures, whether explicable or not, used in the maintenance of **health** as well as in the prevention, diagnosis, improvement or treatment of physical

# Pregnancy management



# Cont.

- The announcement of pregnancy : NB
- Nutrition - throughout the pregnancy the woman is discouraged from eating too much and also some food items

*When you are pregnant, they discourage you from eating a lot of food, thus why they will measure the amount of food you have to eat. The reason behind that is to prevent a mother from giving birth to a big baby.*

- You are discouraged from eating sugarcane, eggs ,

# Labour

- When labour starts a woman has to report to the older woman allocated to be her support system in life.

Encouraged to relax and labour takes its time “ vhana a vha fani na u da a vha di u fana.”

Three elderly women preceded over labour : one woman in front as soon as the head crown the woma was encouraged to bear down

- When the woman is in labour, older woman will get you a “tshigalaphede” to sit on, and they will put a wreath made of blanket on top of it for the comfort of the woman. All those elderly women inside the house should undress and be left with something to tie on the waist. Nobody in the house is allowed to kneel down because it is believed that kneeling can stop the woman from progressing during labour. You give birth being seated, supported on the back by another woman who holds your shoulder, one holding legs. They will cut the cord of a baby.
- This promoted a squatting position

# Support for the woman

- A woman is supported by two women at the back and another woman in front
- The elderly woman washes hands with previously boiled water and they keep on encouraging they never leave until she is ready to receive the child
- After delivery the woman was encouraged to cough in “a tshitemba” or empty bottle - for delivering placenta

- Kanyane MGV: Perceptions of mothers regarding different birthing positions in selected health care facilities in Tshwane District
- Mathikhi EA: Exploration of indigenous childbearing practices in Makhado municipality, Limpopo Province, South Africa
- Studies on current cord care practices in the community
- Experiences of midwifery students in clinical practice

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