

Case Seminar Global Health: Time to deliver!

Sibongile entered the small room and caught her breath. She had tried to come as quickly as possible after receiving the phone call from Phumzile, the Mentor Mother working not far from the office. One of Phumzile's clients, a 17 year old girl who was now nine months pregnant had called for her Mentor Mother to come to her home. When Phumzile got there the water broke and the girl was now going into labor. Not being trained to assisting deliveries Phumzile had called her coordinator Sibongile for help, and the two were now trying to calm the girl, assessing the situation and trying to figure out what to do.

The room was small and sparsely equipped. A mattress was lying directly on the floor and a kerosene stove was tucked away in a corner together with a basket with some onions and carrots. Sibongile had been there before when supervising Phumzile in her work as a Mentor Mother, and she knew that the girl was living there alone with her 18-month old son. The small boy was standing in the door looking terrified as his mother was in apparent distress.

Sibongile evaluated the situation. She was a midwife by training so she was not unfamiliar with the stress and demands of a labor situation, but she also knew the importance of getting the girl to hospital. She could run and get the organisation's car to drive the girl to the nearby hospital in Manzini (Swaziland), it was not far, but at the same time she did not want to leave her as her experience told her that the baby could come any minute now.