

The Importance of Indigenous Languages in Health-Care Services: Some Observations from Limpopo Province, South Africa

Lekau Eleazar Mphasha¹ and Rachel Tsakane Lebesse²

*¹MER Mathivha Centre, ²Department of Advanced Nursing Science,
University of Venda, South Africa
E-mail: ¹<lekau.mphasha@univen.ac.za>, ²<rachel.lebesse@univen.ac.za>*

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ABSTRACT Tackling health issues with the languages which people understand is essential in improving the lives and prospects of millions of people. People in South Africa are vulnerable to Human Immune Virus (HIV) and Acquired Immune Disease Syndrome (AIDS), malnutrition, measles, diarrhea and other health challenges due in part to the lack of important information provided in their own languages and, in a culturally sensitive way. To link language and democracy, it is important that the leaders ensure accountability and transparency. To achieve this, people should be able to communicate with their leaders in the mother-tongue. English is still the language of power, money and status, and indigenous languages are still at a cognitive disadvantage, even though, all eleven languages are official and carry equal status in terms of the Constitution. It is, therefore, essential to develop these languages so that they can be used beyond their traditional domains.