

Summary

Mabel Lohr is an older (born 1942) well respected woman of Shenge, who has delivered many of the town's babies. When we heard that she had served as a midwife (and still does, though she no longer has all her materials – her certificates were also lost during the war), we thought we would ask her about some of her experiences. She readily told us of one of her disasters, which wasn't really her fault but rather that of the doctor, involving the death of the mother, though the child is still alive in Shenge.

Mabel Lohr on Midwifery

interviewed by Abdulai Bendu, 5 Feb 2016, Shenge
Zoom H4n with shotgun mic

Yan ya Abdulai Bendu, nande ako vel mi Mabel Mabel Lohr,
I am Abdulai Bendu, today I have called Mother Mabel, Mabel Lohr,

an̄a hunyi tongi ja gbeme,
to come and tell us about child bearing,

ḡo p̄o gbemiε, so w̄o yi p̄e tongi ḡane ḡa ko gbemiε,
how to deliver, she is also coming to show us the people she has delivered,

so ḡo kela ḡa gbemi ayinde.
and how she sees it to deliver people.

Kε laneki lam̄o bia hun theli kie
But this thing you are coming to say,

n̄o nd̄ond̄o w̄o yema ḡa thelaε w̄ola the, w̄ol̄oka gbi,
anybody that wants to hear it will hear it, in this whole world,

n̄o nd̄ond̄o w̄o yema ḡa thelaε w̄o la the.
anybody that wants to hear it will hear it.

So, nyema la? An̄a yi m̄o la labo nyema la.
So, do you like that? I should ask you if you agree to it.

Nkela bo la li kelen̄, ala b̄o yema.
If you see it as something good, I will agree.

Tem̄ nd̄o ḡo n̄tipe gbemia?
When did you start delivering?

A tipe gbemi 1954.
I started delivering 1954.

Tem̄ landε ve ḡo m̄oi ya?
That time how were you?

Tem lande ejimde ṅo ej ɔf 47 yiars.
That time my age was the age of 47 years.

Tem lan, 1954 ṅo tipe gbemie? (Aa.)
That time 1954, is that the time you started delivering? (Yes.)

Aṅaε ve ṅa mɔ gbemie, ṅa mɔ paka ye mɔ ṅa gbemie?
Those people you deliver, do they pay you for delivering them?

Apim haṅ che mi paka apim hamika nsoie, ha mi ka boyae
Some will not pay me, some will give me soap, they give me small token.

ṅo koṅ gbo we ha che mi paka.
That is all, but they don't pay me.

Kε ahinde ṅa nko gbemie ṅan gbi nshiṅa?
But the people you have delivered do you know them all?

Apim aishiṅa, apim achehaṅ pe koṅshi.
Some I know them, some I would not know them at all again.

Shenge boi fli wɔɔ shenge kae ya gbemie wɔ yawɔ.
Even Shenge boy in Shenge here I delivered him of his mother.

Kε ahinde gbi ṅa nko gbemie nshi tɔm lam?
But all the people you delivered do you know the total?

Ache ṅo pe bɔ shi,
I will not be able to know it again,

rai lande bul fli ṅo ko tuk kε rai ε ṅalε ṅo lɔ, lɔ akache make.
even one of the paper (records) has disapeared, it is just the other one that is there, where I use to mark.

Mɔni bɔ shi nenthe tha nko koi ko gbemie? (Aa.)
Would you now be able to know the amount of years you have took delivering? (Yes.)

Nen thi wɔ?
How many years?

Nen thi koṅɔɔ ni waṅ nira.
Thirty-three years.

Nko lɔ veio?
You have been on it for so long?

Ako lɔ veio.
I have been on it for too long.

Ina tongie mɔ ṅa gbemi ahindea?

Who showed *you* how to deliver people?

Thetha mi ka che ña mpanth ma lande peñ bifo wɔ mmu hu.
My grandmother use to do the work before she died.

ke temde ve aka che ton.
But that time I was small.

Ya ka ni hani santhe, iso bul akonj thukuli jomi kuse ayema ko jo,
When I had grown up, one morning after I had just warm my rice and wanted to eat it,

ahinde hai hun ha hayema no po koi no bul po wɔ wom nyamba ko
Then the people came, they said they want one person to send her to Moyamba

kanja ko kan ña hungbemie, Nthela nye, po mi apoint, yai koni.
To go and teach me how to deliver, you hear that right, I was appointed, and so I went.

Ika chelo mpanj bul.sistha koba ñaha kana hi mpanthoe.
We were there for one month. Sister Koba is the one that taught us this work.

Sista koba lan wɔ lo mu han ma nande?
That Sister Koba she still there today?

Wɔ lo nyambako, won be ko ritaya, yelαιο we
She is there in Moyamba, she herself has retired, as it is.

So wonj wɔ tongie mo ña gbemie?
So she showed how the delivery work?

So gbemie ki nkanjala fli?
So this delivery you learned it thoroughly?

Akanjala fli. Aka biela rai fli.
I really learned it. I actually use to have the paper.

Nsie tem pem doki yei chan-çande raiye ño konj tuk
You know the war time. The going about from one place to another, I have lost it

ke kite ñomi fi.
but I still have the kits.

Abie loni bope sizos kune abie loni makintosh kune,
I do not only have the scissors and the makintosh in it.

abie loni nondo ño po leli kunthe. Yen-o-yen gbi ho konj tuk.
I do not have that thing they use to look [inside?] pregnant women. Everything is lost.

So thane gbi nka bitha?
So you use to have all those thing?

gbi.ho ka che kite kune.
All used to be in the kit.

So yan aka bo mine mo gbemi kile ko ni pomthe ken anai bende na nae
So me I always think you just deliver in the home with the leaves like our first people how they do it

Ve gbi ala nae.
All that I can do it.

nshi pomthe?
Do you know leaves?

A si pomthe, ye laio be wosoe ako tu na ha nya kunthe,
I know the leaves, as it is even that native medicine chalk I can pound it for pregnant women,

kunde ko gbo che mpanj mentij, mo ko kul.
if the pregnancy has reach seven month, you drink it.

Ye temde hoh moie ha gbemoe,
When your delivering time approaches,

le nose ha ni gbo ke ke nrnth gbo mo gbo runth li bul komoe koj honi.
If the nurse would not make it fast, when you push you just push once and the baby is out.

Lane laa li kelen ahin na nan the,
That is very good for people to hear,

na nan sie le, nkoni skul livil gbi ke mo gbemi ahinde yen kelen
for them to know that you did not go to skul far at all but you do deliver people very good.

wan day asothoni mu problem ya loi gbemie,
Not one day I have not got problem delivering,

ke wanta bul ka che lo wonga ka Tommy taulker ka ke ka che peshent siza.
but one girl used to be in this house to Tommy Tucker but she was a patient Siza (Caesurean section).

Ye koj hoth kunde pae ho ma gbemo wonga.
After she has got pregnant, she was told no delivery at home.

Poo wo na ko gbemo nyamba ko ke lo po ka na wo siza, nthela nye.
They said she is to go to Moyamba, there they did her the siza.

Velen thilande hun gbo le chal ka ni kune no woi neki.
After that she just sat and felt her delivery pain.

Nos gbi na ka cheni eriaio ai, hospitalai fli nos ka che na ni,
There was no nurse in that whole area, even in the hospital there was no nurse,

dispensa che ɲa ni, be nɔs che ɲa ni lane beiyɛ wɔka che ɲa ka cheɛ dɔkta,
there was no dispenser and no nurse but that time the Paramount-chief that was here was a doctor,

lagbando ako gbo pɔkɔni ilel wɔɛ, Sijismɔn, Sijismɔn wɔ ka che as beiyɛ, nthela nye?
This man I've just forgotten his name, Sigismund, Sigismund was the chief, you hear that right?

Yɛ wanta kunɛ wɔɛ hɔ nekɛ hami kɔ vel, ahun gbemi wantaɛ,
When the girl was feeling the delivering pain, they went to call me, to come and deliver the girl,

yai wɔ hin, yai wɔ pabondɛ mɔmi prat wɔɛ, achen ƙoo. awɔ bikɔs che mpanth mami maɛ.
and I said to him, I told him if it is Mummy Pratt I'm not going. I said because it is not my work.

Ye pɔ koyi kanɔɔ pɔɛ nkegbo nɔɛ bi gballe kɔ ko kunwɔɛ as sizaɛ
When we were taught, they said if you see a mark on the belly as Siza,
nɔ ncheni ɲa gbemi wɔ kilɛko, gbemi hɔpital kɔɛ
another person should not deliver her at home, it is hospital delivery.

Yaɲ bɛ pɛ ɲami hɔ ko mi ko haɲ ni yai kɔ,
Myself they spoke to me for a long time and I went,

ɲa wɔ ɲa koɲ kɔ ko nurse che lɔni, ɲa koɲ kɔ ko dɔktaɛ chelɔni,
they said they said they went to the nurse she was not there, they went to the doctor he was not there,

yai hundɛ la veyeni bɛ ken ha hun na ka, koɲ bɛ gbemɔɛ.
When I went it didn't took long the time I had been here, she would given birth,

Afta bake ɲɔi hun gba ki gbiɲ, blidin ɲɔi huɲyi ki fiɲ,
The after birth came and stuck there heavily, then bleeding burst out badly,

Ihani gbi, hani gbi, hani gbi, wɔi keni ken ki.
We tried and tried and we tried, then early morning came.

Beye wɔn ayenɛ hun, hun wɔɲ injekshɔn, bikɔs yaɲ ache injek a siɲɔ ni.
The chief himself came, he came and give injection because me I don't, I don't know how to do it.

Beye wɔn ayenɛ fli wɔi hun wɔɲ injekshɔnaa, wan themɔɛ wɔi huɲ hu.
The chief himself came, no sooner he came and injected the girl, the girl died.

Komɔ landɛ ko bɛ hani gbako, wɔ tika.
That child is now grown, she is in this town.

komɔ gbem wɔ?
The child she gave to him?

Wa maɛ, wɔtika, mɔmi prat ki wante wɔi, wɔ tika
A girl child, she is in this town, Mummy Pratt's sister.

ko gbemiyɛ gbi ɲɔ nko gbemɛ?
All the delivering you have done?

Wɔn kɛndɛ vɛ wɔ asoθhɔ bɔ prɔblɛm.
That is the only one I have got problem in.

Lanɛ laŋ la sɔkba mɔ gbi
That is the only one that disturbed you.

Gbi. Kɛ yɛndɛ ŋɔ bi lanɛvɛ, vɛlɛn thilandɛ dɔktɛ wɔ ka ŋa wɔ ɔprɛshɔndɛ ka hun,
At all. But the reason for that one, after that the doctor that did his operation,

mista, langba landɛ koŋ pa hu, wɔi hun wɔ ŋai hun hɔm lɛ ŋa ma blem wanthemdɛ vɛo,
mister, the man is dead, he came and he told them that you should not blame that woman,

hɔɛ ika ko hɔm wan themdɛ woth bo kun ma gbemɔ aot, kɔ gbemɔ hɔspitulai
he said we had told the woman that when ever she got pregnant, she should not give birth out, she
should come to the hospital.

Yɛ ha ka stich kun wɔɛ, ko lɔ gbemɛkɛ ŋɔ ho kaɛ,
When her belly was stiched, where the baby comes out,

ŋa ŋɔi stich ahɔl, siɛ yɛ komɔɛ wɔ hundɛ honi bo,
they had stiched the exit mouth, you know when the baby is about to come, after it is out,
afta bakɛ vɛ ŋɔ lɛ rɛsthe,
the after birth rest a bit.

pa bonde fli ni ŋɔ rɛdi ha hun, hɛ hɔ ha ni ki
If really it is ready to come out, it will make like this,

hɔ hani ki, hɔ chaini fli ŋɛ chanthe. Mɔni gbo ha ki, mɔni gb kithik ŋɔi honi wai.
make like this, it rises up again like a baby. You just make like this, you just press then it comes out
easy.

Hɔ ŋa ma blem wanthemdɛ, afta bakɛ nai landɛ ŋɔ kanthka gbaŋ, ŋɔ che bɔ honi.
He said, don't you blame the woman, the afterbirth road was blocked, it can't come out.

wanthemdɛ ka lɛ blid te ni hu.
The woman kept bleeding until she died.

So ko gbemɛ gbi ŋɔ nko gbemɛ?
So in all the deliverings you have done?

wɔn kɛndɛ vɛ lɔ asoθhɔ bo prɔblɛm.
It is the only one I ever got problem.

Ko gbemɛ gbi ŋɔ nko gbemɛ handɔ ŋɔ chaŋ mɔ che fɔi?
In all the deliverings you have delivered which one is the easiest?

yɛ nɔɛ wɔ koŋ gbemɔ libul mɔikɛ tiŋdɛ kunɛ.
When a person would have given birth for the first time making it two.

Kε gbemɔ nseie praimi, ye pɔ hɔ primie ve, aagbemɔ lande kɔ kath.
But the first birth giving primi, When they say primi, that birth giving is difficult.
Gbemɔe kɔ bi stej.
Birth giving has stage.

Pamde kune wɔe nɔ tipe neki et-o-klɔk oki,
If the pregnancy begins to pain at eight o clock,

paliiki tempim te ki et-o-klɔk ichɔl wɔni huɔ gbemɔ.
the whole day, some times until eight o clock in the evening before giving birth.

Kε ayema mɔ yi yi bul,
But I just want to ask you one question,

gbemie ki la mɔɔ ki kune, mɔ memieni na lan na mɔm che gbemi ahinde fli-fli?
This delivering work that you are in, are you happy for you to be just delivering?

Ya la memieni fli ha haɔ mpanth haɔ pɔkimde,
I am happy about that really to work for my country,
bikɔs ye ha ka yɔkim ye, ha wɔ ha kagbɔrɔ, lanlabi akɔ akɔ che gbemie.
because when they took me, they said it was for Kagboro, that is why I am delivering.

Lanɔ ya gbemie fli. Ya memieni ha lan.
That is why I am really delivering. I am happy about that.

Jaε la bi imemieni na yaɔ chemɔ vel na che mɔ huɔ yi ε
The reason why we are happy to be calling to come and ask you,

mɔm mbi ja gbe na nane na hu nɔni mue na nan si.
you have many things for those that have not come yet to know.

So labi ichɔɔ len na hin chemɔ vel.
So that is why we like to call you.

Che risen pika nɔ gbi. ishie nane na bia kɔ hunde,
It is for no other reason. We know that those that are going to come,

na bi intrest ko lane laɔ nsie.
would have interest in what you know.

So seke we, Abatoke chema mɔni.
So thank you thank you, may the God be with you.