



# Integrating Indigenous Medicinal Knowledge into Kenyan Healthcare Policy: A Gynaecological and Obstetric Perspective

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## Abstract

In Kenya, many pregnant women and those seeking gynaecological care use indigenous medicinal knowledge (IMK) alongside or instead of biomedical services. This occurs within a healthcare policy framework that largely marginalises traditional systems, creating a gap in integrated, culturally competent care. This policy brief analyses the role of IMK in Kenyan obstetrics and gynaecology. Its objective is to propose actionable policy steps for the safe, respectful, and evidence-informed integration of relevant IMK practices into national maternal and reproductive health strategies. The brief is based on a desk review of existing literature, including peer-reviewed studies, government reports, and policy documents. It synthesises evidence on the prevalence, types, and perceived efficacy of IMK used for obstetric and gynaecological conditions in Kenya. IMK use is widespread, with a high proportion of women in some regions using herbal remedies during pregnancy. Key themes include its use for antenatal care, labour augmentation, and postpartum recovery. A critical finding is the lack of formal dialogue and referral pathways between traditional practitioners and biomedical health facilities. The current policy disconnect fails to leverage potential benefits and may expose women to risks from unregulated use. A structured integration framework is required to improve health outcomes and patient-centred care. Key recommendations include: establishing a national taskforce with representation from traditional healers, biomedical professionals, and community leaders; funding research into the safety and efficacy of priority herbal medicines; developing clinical guidelines for healthcare providers on respectful engagement; and piloting referral protocols in select counties. Indigenous knowledge, traditional medicine, health policy, maternal health, gynaecology, Kenya, integration This

brief provides a focused analysis and concrete policy proposals to bridge the gap between indigenous medicinal knowledge and formal healthcare systems in Kenyan obstetrics and gynaecology.

**Keywords:** *Traditional medicine, Maternal health, Sub-Saharan Africa, Healthcare policy, Indigenous knowledge systems, Gynaecological care, Ethnomedicine*



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