



Leaders in Global Health Call on Governments to Protect Women and Midwives Amidst Pandemic

ICM and partners mark International Day of the Midwife with six calls to action

The Hague, ND – May 5, 2020 — The International Confederation of Midwives (ICM) spoke early this month with the majority of its 143 Member Associations across 124 countries, and accounts from the midwives working on the frontline of this pandemic are harrowing, unveiling gender discrimination, human rights abuses, over-medicalisation of birth, fear and misinformation culminating in growing distress among women and midwives. As a result of these conversations, ICM has prepared a statement in partnership with the WHO, UNICEF, and UNFPA that outlines six calls to action governments around the world must take to uphold the rights of women, babies, and midwives, both within the context of this pandemic, and as countries attempt to establish new protocols and procedures within their health sectors.

In its statement ICM, in partnership with UNFPA calls on governments and global leaders to take the following, immediate actions:

1. Ensure equitable availability of (PPE) for midwives, regardless of their work environment, supported by additional training on correct and appropriate usage of PPE
2. Include midwives in policy, decision-making, planning and response to COVID-19
3. Stop the re-deployment of midwives and ensure the quality of midwifery care
4. Protect pregnant women and their babies and uphold their right to a positive birthing experience
5. Uphold women's sexual and reproductive rights
6. Direct funding for maternal health services and basic resources to midwives' associations and women's groups to ensure they reach the most vulnerable

The release of this statement coincides with International Day of the Midwife (IDM) – an event usually reserved to celebrate the life-promoting and life-saving work of midwives. Given the urgent nature of the action items outlined in its statement, ICM is leveraging the global spotlight maternal healthcare receives on IDM to bring awareness to the disturbing realities midwives and women have been subjected to amidst this pandemic.

Please click [here](#) to access the joint statement. Healthcare organisations, Midwives' Associations, and individuals have the opportunity to demonstrate their support for the six calls to action by signing a digital copy of the statement, [here](#).

For more information about this year's IDM and the various ways to get involved, please visit the [dedicated event page](#) on the ICM website.

Quotes from Leading

Organisations

“Midwives around the world are becoming ill and some are dying as a result of COVID-19, further aggravating the human rights violations midwives already experience and resulting in the compromised safety of birthing mothers and their newborns and families. Life continues in a pandemic, women still birth their babies, and midwives are still essential to optimise this everyday experience and to keep mothers and babies healthy and safe. Midwives must also be kept healthy and safe. We call on governments and global leaders to immediately implement the calls to action we’ve shared today in conjunction with our partners in maternal health.” - Sally Pairman, Chief Executive of ICM.

“The UN agency for Sexual and Reproductive Health, UNFPA salutes all the midwives on the frontlines of the global COVID 19 response, working tirelessly to ensure safe and healthy outcomes for women and their babies. UNFPA stands committed towards supporting midwives in these unprecedented and very difficult times. It is our top priority to ensure that maternal and newborn health services continue to remain prioritised and that midwives are fully protected and have the necessary personal protective equipment, guidelines and protocols to ensure their own safety and ability to provide safe, timely and respectful care to all pregnant and breastfeeding women.” - Anneka Ternald Knutsson, Chief, Sexual and Reproductive Health Branch, UNFPA.

About the International Confederation of Midwives

Founded in 1922, The International Confederation of Midwives (ICM) is an accredited non-governmental organization that represents midwives' associations worldwide to achieve common goals in the care of mothers and newborns. Currently, there are 143 ICM member associations in 124 countries. For more information about ICM visit internationalmidwives.org

About International Day of the Midwife

Each 5th of May, ICM leads global recognition and celebration of the work of midwives. ICM develops a campaign theme for this occasion to motivate its Member Associations, partners and stakeholders to raise awareness about the status of midwives and the essential care they provide to mothers and their newborns.

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