



Strengthening Midwifery Globally

ETHICAL RECRUITMENT OF MIDWIVES

BACKGROUND

A widespread critical shortage of midwives has brought about a situation that has serious implications for maternity services worldwide. There has been aggressive recruitment of midwives from one country to another. This gives rise to issues of exploitation, unethical recruitment practices and the depletion of scarce and crucial midwifery expertise from developing countries. There is consequently also a lack of effective human resource planning for midwifery services at both country and international levels.

STATEMENT OF BELIEF

The ICM believes that the right of the individual midwife to migrate is legitimate and that midwives will continue to seek career advancement and education opportunities in countries other than their own. International recruitment provides excellent learning opportunities for midwives who will in turn enhance the care of women and their families in the midwives' country of origin. The ICM believes however that recruitment of midwives from other countries cannot be a long term solution to midwifery shortages; and that the international recruitment of midwives must not be carried out against the interests of another country where the lack of experienced midwives will have serious implications for the midwifery services and standards of care available to women and their newborns. Recruitment practices should be guided by ethical principles such as those ensuring freedom of movement; fair and equitable working conditions; and provision of safe working environments. Midwives recruited from other countries should receive sufficient and appropriate orientation, training and education to ensure that they understand the culture and health care of the host country and the protection of women's rights.

POSITION

The ICM is committed to supporting the ethical recruitment of midwives internationally. The ICM urges midwives to contribute to the development of recruitment practices within their country that are based on ethical principles and codes of practice to ensure that:

- the right of the individual midwife to migrate is supported
- developing countries are not targeted for recruitment
- midwives recruited from other countries are protected from exploitation, lack of appropriate information, and false and misleading claims

- midwives recruited from other countries are protected by employment/industrial legislation as provided to other midwives employed on a basis of long-term residence
- midwives recruited from other countries have access to safe and equitable working conditions, appropriate orientation to work practices, career advancement opportunities, education and professional development
- midwives recruited from other countries should be legally protected by the employing country until they start working.

GUIDING STATEMENT TO MEMBER ASSOCIATIONS:

Member Associations are urged to lobby for and contribute to the development and implementation of ethical guidelines and codes of conduct for the international recruitment of midwives that will provide positive opportunities for learning and professional experience to further enhance the care of women, their newborns and their families worldwide

OTHER RELEVANT DOCUMENTS

- Code for Practice for NHS employers involved in the international recruitment of healthcare professionals. Department of Health, UK (2001).
- WHO. International migration of health personnel: a challenge for health systems in developing countries, Fifty-ninth World Health Assembly, Provisional Agenda Item 11.12. WHO, 2006.
- Van Eyck K. Women and International migration in the health sector, final report of Public Health Services International Participatory Action Research 2003. Public Service International, France, 2004.

Adopted at Glasgow Council meeting, 2008

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