



Strengthening Midwifery Globally

## HEALTH OF WOMEN AND CHILDREN IN DISASTERS

# Position statement

### BACKGROUND

Many natural and human-induced disasters, which occur all over the world, threaten the safety and wellbeing of women, their newborn and their families. They may cause short-, medium- and long-term health problems. Disasters not only have serious implications in the countries/areas in which they have occurred, but may lead to various health hazards in other countries/areas as well.

### STATEMENT OF BELIEF

The ICM is concerned about the collapse of social systems caused by disasters and their influence on people's health. ICM also recognises a strong need to strengthen disaster preparedness and provide education for mitigating the effects of disaster. While providing the care necessary to women, babies and families in order for them to recover, maintain and improve their health after disasters, midwives work to develop midwifery strategies for women and their families during and after a disaster.

### POSITION

Education for midwives should include components that provide knowledge and raise awareness of the health problems of women and families both at the time of a disaster and in the mid- to long-term period afterwards.

### GUIDING STATEMENT TO MEMBER ASSOCIATIONS:

ICM encourages member associations to:

- recognise the importance of preparedness for disasters
- expand the contents of midwifery education programmes to include health problems of women and families related to disasters
- develop research focusing on midwifery care strategies appropriate for these situations.

Member associations should aim to have representation, whenever possible, on committees forming policy on disasters at governmental level.

### RELATED ICM DOCUMENTS

- ICM position statement. Women, children, and midwives in situations of war and civil unrest. ICM, 2005.

OTHER RELEVANT DOCUMENTS

- ICN Position Statement. Nurses and disaster preparedness. Geneva, Switzerland: ICN, 2001.

**Adopted at Brisbane Council meeting, 2005**

*Due for next review 2011*