



Strengthening Midwifery Globally

## MIDWIVES AND THE ABUSE OF WOMEN AND CHILDREN

### BACKGROUND

Around the world, especially in south-east Asia, central and Latin America, India and Africa, poverty results in widespread incidence of child labour, child prostitution, and women and children living on the street. Lack of recognition of women's human rights has also led to domestic violence, sexual abuse and human trafficking.

At the same time, industrialised countries, particularly those with a lowered reproductive rate, are facing serious issues that affect the welfare of women and children including anxiety over parenting, birth of extremely low birth-weight infants, multiple pregnancies, lack of parenting support and divorce-related child abuse.

### STATEMENT OF BELIEF

The International Confederation of Midwives believes that women and children must be respected and that their human rights should be recognised in all societies. Abuse prevention must be carried out and care for those abused be provided according to the situation in each country or region.

### POSITION

The ICM will:

- Lobby international governmental and non-governmental organisations to address the issue of abuse actively
- Encourage its member associations in various countries to support educational campaigns and strategies towards prevention of abuse.

### GUIDING STATEMENT TO MEMBER ASSOCIATIONS:

Member associations are encouraged, in their respective countries, to:

- Declare their commitment, as representatives of a profession protecting the health of women and children, to active promotion of abuse prevention
- Demonstrate their anti-abuse position not only to their members but also to the general public
- Extend co-operation to those pursuing campaigns and measures for prevention of abuse, particularly abuse of women and children
- Collaborate with networks, governmental and non-governmental organisations concerned with abuse prevention
- Enable their members to enhance their knowledge of abuse-prevention measures and anti-abuse networks, in order to give professional advice as necessary to women
- Support their members in assisting women and children to recognise their rights.

Member associations should encourage individual midwives to:

- Be aware of abuse through physical, verbal and non-verbal evidence, and to support women appropriately
- Help women recognise the abuse and refer to abuse support organisations for further consultation, if applicable
- Support women and children to participate in available follow-up programmes.

## **RELATED ICM DOCUMENTS**

- Safe Motherhood – a women's human right. Report of the ICM Africa Regional Workshop, Harare, Zimbabwe, March 2001. *International Midwifery* 2001;14 (2):4-5.
- ICM Position Statement. Midwives, Women and Human Rights. ICM, 2002.

## **OTHER RELEVANT DOCUMENTS**

- UN. Universal Declaration of Human Rights. UN, 1948.
- UN. Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women. UN, 1979.
- UNICEF. A Human Rights Approach to UNICEF Programming for Children and Women: What It Is, and Some Changes It Will Bring. UNICEF, 1998.
- WHO. Global Symposium on Violence and Health. The Kobe Declaration. October 1999. Kobe, Japan.
- Reproductive Health Rights. Kobe Declaration (October 15, 1999)
- UNFPA. A Practical Approach to Gender-Based Violence (2001).
- UNFPA. The State of the World Population 2000. Chapter 3 Ending Violence Against Women and Girls: A Human Right and Health Priority. UNFPA, 2000.
- UNFPA & AIDOS. Addressing Violence against Women: Piloting and Programming. UNFPA, 2003.

**Adopted at Glasgow Council meeting, 2008**

*Due for next review 2014*