



Strengthening Midwifery Globally

## MIDWIVES' PROVISION OF ABORTION-RELATED SERVICES

### BACKGROUND

Unsafe abortion is one of the five major causes of maternal mortality. Global, regional and national agencies have set goals and guidance for reducing high maternal mortality in general and abortion-related maternal mortality and morbidity in particular. Governments agree that '... in circumstances where abortion is not against the law, health systems should train and equip health providers to provide safe services....' (ICPD 1994; ICPD +5 1999; WHO 2003; Maputo Declaration, 2004).

Evidence demonstrates that access to safe abortion-related services can almost eliminate maternal deaths due to unsafe abortion (WHO, 2003). Realising that authorised and well-trained midwives can provide competent and safe abortion-related services, many governments have modified their laws and policies to empower midwives to provide comprehensive abortion services. In South Africa, for example, liberalising indications for safe abortion and provision of comprehensive abortion care by trained midwives, including post-abortion contraception, has led to a 90% reduction in abortion-related mortality.

Maternal mortality ratios are at critical levels, especially in Africa where women face a 1-in-16 lifetime risk of dying in childbirth and Asia, with a 1-in-65 lifetime risk of maternal death. In this context, and given the changing and expanded role of the midwife in providing abortion-related services in its member associations, ICM has reviewed its position on the care of women post-abortion.

### STATEMENT OF BELIEF

The International Confederation of Midwives believes that a woman who seeks or requires abortion-related services is entitled to be provided with such services by midwives.

In keeping with this belief the midwife should:

- Consider such care to be within the role of the midwife as defined by the laws and policies of his/her country
- Recognise the woman's right to decide for herself and provide information, counselling and services according to the woman's needs
- Refer the woman as appropriate for any further treatment that may be required and that is beyond the scope of midwifery practice
- Provide the woman (and where appropriate her family) with education concerning her future health, including contraception and planning for future pregnancy
- Recognise the emotional, psychological and social support which may be needed by the woman and respond appropriately.

## POSITION

The education of midwives should include training to prepare them for their role in providing abortion-related services that ensure safety and well being for the woman.

## GUIDING STATEMENT TO MEMBER ASSOCIATIONS:

Member associations are urged to seek to influence the training/ education of midwives to ensure that they have the knowledge and skills to provide abortion-related services.

## RELATED ICM DOCUMENTS

- Resolution agreed at ICM/ Ghana Registered Midwives Association (GRMA) African midwives regional meeting, November 2007.

## OTHER RELEVANT DOCUMENTS

- ICPD. Report of the International Conference on Population and Development. Cairo, Egypt, 1994.
- ICPD+5. Implementing the Recommendations of the International Conference on Population and Development. ICPD 5-year Review and Appraisal, 1999.
- Maputo Declaration. 4th Summit Of ACP Heads of State and Government. Maputo, Mozambique. Maputo Declaration: Together Shaping Our Future. June 2004.
- WHO Reproductive Health Department. Safe abortion: Technical and policy guidance for health systems. Geneva, Switzerland: WHO, 2003.

**Adopted at Glasgow Council meeting, 2008**

*Due for next review 2014*