



Strengthening Midwifery Globally

COLLABORATION AND PARTNERSHIPS FOR HEALTHY WOMEN AND INFANTS

BACKGROUND

Midwives for centuries have worked in partnership with women, with families and with communities to achieve good outcomes of pregnancy and birth. However it is increasingly apparent that the effective promotion of health and prevention of disease within maternity and newborn care cannot be accomplished by a single professional, community or policy-making group. Many women and babies continue to die needlessly because there is delay in seeking midwifery care, no access to the next level of health services when complications arise, or no medication available at community level to prevent or treat complications. It is appropriate that midwives lead the way to expand the traditional partnerships for care to those with other health professional groups, policy makers and global agencies that share a common vision of healthy women and newborns throughout the world. The ICM supports the demand for continuity of care for childbearing women, and for collaboration along the 'continuum of care' that may be needed by an individual pregnant woman. This collaborative chain links community health workers into community-based primary care provided by professional midwives, and also with district and regional hospital-based care from professional midwives and medical specialists. At each level of care, women should receive respect, quality care, timely consultation and referral when necessary to doctors and other specialists. The collaboration between midwives, other health professionals and consumer groups, and between ICM and other international partner organizations, should be constructive and focused on women's needs at every level.

STATEMENT OF BELIEF

Midwives worldwide, as autonomous health professionals, are responsible not only for the care they give directly to women, but for the timely identification of those women who would benefit from consultation at the next level of care, including referral for specialist attention when needed. It is also acknowledged that, in many areas of the world, midwives are those to whom pregnant women are referred by community health workers, when complications are suspected. The ICM believes that all women will benefit when there is continuity and collaboration among the range of health care workers from community to district to regional settings, where such collaboration is based upon mutual trust and respect. The power of partnerships goes beyond what each individual, group or agency can do alone, thereby maximising the effectiveness of strategies to promote the health of women and newborns.

POSITION

The ICM recognises the importance of the effective 'continuum of care' that needs to be available to optimise healthy outcomes for the woman and her newborn. At the same time such clinical collaboration needs to be supported by partnerships at the level of national associations and international agencies. The ICM encourages all midwives to:

- Work collaboratively with other health workers caring for childbearing women
- Promote respect, trust and open communication among all levels of health workers as the hallmarks of midwifery care that result in the best possible health care available to all women

The Confederation is also interested in establishing and strengthening partnerships that will promote the health and wellbeing of women and newborns, and the advancement of the profession of midwifery, in keeping with the following principles:

- Partners share the common goal or purpose of promoting the health of women and childbearing families in keeping with the ICM Vision Statement
- Each partner brings a special expertise to the table with a commitment to listen, learn and respect others' views and suggestions for action
- Shared leadership, based on the needed expertise for a given strategic goal, along with teamwork, is the norm.

Each partner is able to commit resources to support individual participation in the group or coalition, in keeping with financial guidelines and priorities of the partner agency.

GUIDING STATEMENT TO MEMBER ASSOCIATIONS:

Member associations are encouraged to offer assistance and advice to midwives in practice, education, policy and management who work to reinforce a continuum of care for women in their communities, based on continuity and collaboration. Member associations are also encouraged to seek appropriate partnerships for the benefit of women and newborns within their country or region.

RELATED ICM DOCUMENTS

- ICM. Vision statement. ICM, 2008.
- ICM. Definition of the Midwife. ICM, 2005
- ICM. International Code of Ethics for Midwives. ICM, 2008.

OTHER RELEVANT DOCUMENTS

- Partnership for Maternal, Newborn, and Child Health: Conceptual framework 2005
- WHO. World Health Report 2005: Make every woman and child count.
- WHO. World Health Report 2006: Human resources for health.
- Bruce T, McKane S. Community-Based Public Health: A Partnership Model. Washington, DC, USA: American Public Health Association, 2000.

Adopted at Glasgow Council meeting, 2008

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