

## **Opening Address to the ICM 29<sup>th</sup> Triennial Congress by Bridget Lynch**

“Look at where we are where we sit now and what we have achieved. This Congress shows what midwives can do when we are united, when we set a goal and when we work together.”

Acknowledging global and bilateral partners, Bridget continued, “We cannot do our work alone; we count on the support of our partners nationally and globally. This Triennium has seen global partnership that hasn’t been seen before with ICM. I would like to especially recognise our partners SIDA - SIDA has put us on this road. Two midwives in particular, Anneke Knutsen, and Gunille Gustavson, have worked passionately to bring the Swedish government to recognise the vital importance of midwifery and to commit development funds specifically to strengthening midwifery capacity globally.”

Bridget gave special thanks to the Dutch Government for their commitment which has supported the development of ICM headquarters, and midwifery globally. ICM programme work to strengthen Sierra Leone has been supported by Dutch Government aid. Sierra Leone is one of the most recent members of the ICM and is now working closely with Dutch midwives in a twinning programme to strengthen midwifery and raise awareness of the needs of midwives in both countries.

ICM and FIGO have partnered over many years but particularly in the past triennium, FIGO has come out strongly in support of autonomous midwives. If you want to see a clear message about the importance of autonomous midwifery practice globally, look at FIGO’s statement made on International Day of the Midwife 2011.

Bridget recognised the special ‘sibling’ relationship between ICM and the UNFPA, crediting the ‘inspired guidance’ of Vincent Faveau, who has led the ICM and UNFPA partnership development. During this last Triennium, the ICM UNFPA programme has been developed to deliver education, regulation and strengthened midwifery services in 23 countries across Africa, Asia, Latin America & Caribbean. She also paid tribute to Dr Laura Laski, who has brought her passion to the joint programme which has become a central focus for UNFPA’s work to improve the health of women and infants globally. Thanks to Luc de Bernis who alongside Vincent was one of the ‘strange twins’ working together for midwifery globally. Vincent has led the delivery of the State of the World Midwifery Report: Delivering Health Saving Lives which provides an overview of midwifery capacity in 58 low resource countries. This will be an important tool to improve access to midwifery care globally. Congress has been chosen for the global launch of the State of the World Midwifery Report which will happen here tomorrow, after a year of work growing out of global symposium of partners to discuss midwifery and ways we could work together to strengthen midwifery.

Tribute was paid to a very special midwife, Theresa Shaver of the WRA who - in leading the White Ribbon Alliance - has committed to making midwifery visible. WRA joined with us to make International Day of the Midwife (IDM) this year and alongside Save the Children raised the profile of midwives in countries around the world and contributed so much to the success of our walks around the world. IDM set up an energy and a vibration that continues here today, and which culminated in the walk yesterday with declaring to the world that midwifery will no longer be invisible.

Thanks were also given to Joy Lawn – Strategic Consultant Director of Global Policy and Evidence at Save the Children - who developed advocacy work with ICM to bring midwifery to the G8.

Midwives show enthusiasm and passion that is unparalleled in any other healthcare profession. We lay claim to this territory of supporting women in their pregnancy and health, through pregnancy, childbirth and after.

#### **Landmark achievements for ICM and midwives this Triennium**

- 22 new associations joined the ICM
- 3 taskforces delivered Global Standards for education, regulation and competencies for midwives. Now we are the first healthcare profession in the world to have global standards for education and regulation. The World Health Organization will be referencing these standards in their own documents
- Development of the Membership Association Capacity Assessment Tools (MACAT)

Going from country to country it would be hard to recognise that we were the same profession, given differences in practice from one place to the next. In many countries there is no regulation, in some countries long histories of regulation.

Our vision moving forward is to have a midwife in attendance at every birth, working as part of a strong team in partnership with paediatricians, obstetricians, gynaecologists, anaesthetists and community healthworkers. Working to these global standards so that a midwife, is a midwife, is a midwife wherever she works in the world.

A key achievement for this Triennium and an indication of how far we have come is the involvement of partners not just as delegates but as programme participants and leads for partner presentations. Partner panels will be delivered by:

- FIGO, who have been so supportive of autonomous midwifery practice
- Gates Foundation, who contributed immensely to maternal and new born health
- Partnership for Maternal and Newborn Child Health, who have worked hard to get midwifery on the G8 table and have been instrumental in Every Woman, Every Child.

With an emotional rounding off, Bridget said: "I am always stunned by the level of enthusiasm and commitment of midwives. Everywhere I've gone the same compassion, commitment and passion. I want to thank all of you I've met. I feel like there is only a small part of me that is left since I started out as President, the rest has been filled with all of you."

Viva the midwives!