

## **NEWS RELEASE Global partners stand behind global standards for midwifery**

On the last day of the International Confederation of Midwives Triennial Congress in Durban, South Africa, global agencies have expressed their commitment to work with each other and with ICM to tackle maternal mortality. The UN Population Fund, World Health Organization (WHO), the Swedish International Development Agency (Sida) and the International Federation of Gynaecologists and Obstetricians (FIGO) have each pledged to support the implementation of ICM's landmark global standards for midwifery education and regulation as a core strategy to tackle maternal mortality worldwide. Around 350,000 women die each year as a result of preventable complications in pregnancy and childbirth. 99% of these deaths happen in low income countries, many of which are in sub-Saharan Africa. Millennium Development Goal 5 commits countries to delivering significant improvements to maternal health worldwide but has been the slowest moving of all the MDGs so far.

'Evidence shows that access to competent, educated and strong midwives significantly reduces maternal and infant mortality.' said Bridget Lynch, President. 'ICM set out on the Road to Durban three years ago, committed to reaching our destination with the tools needed to help governments around the world tackle unacceptable rates of maternal and infant mortality. Since then, we have worked with midwives of the world and our global partners to make sure we arrived with these tools in our hands. I am proud to say that we are now the first health profession in the world to have achieved global standards for the competency, education and regulation of our workforce. These, alongside the information provided by the UNFPA's State of the World Midwifery Report will be essential to the achievement of each countries maternal mortality target.'

Speaking in support of the ICM global standards **Dr Babatunde Osotimehin, Executive Director, UNFPA** said, 'The three pillars of quality midwifery workforce are education, regulation and professional associations. If one of these pillars is weak, the whole midwifery will be weak. We welcome ICM's global standards and will be working to support the dissemination of these standards with UN agencies and our other partners, as a tool to improve the quality of care received by women and newborn globally.'

**Anneka Knutsson, Director of Gender Equality, Democracy/Human Rights, Health and Education, Sida**, also welcomed the standards: 'To tackle malaria we knew we needed nets. To improve child survival, we knew we needed vaccines. With the State of the World Midwifery Report and ICM's global standards for education and regulation, we have now found our tools to reduce maternal mortality. As partners we now need to consolidate these impressive achievements and move forward. We need to use this information to advocate, to plan and to check on results in those countries where we work. As partners we share a responsibility to use these tools and to bring our influence to bear on national budgeted health plans that will deliver high quality midwifery education and services for women.'

The global professional organisation representing gynaecologists and obstetricians worldwide congratulated the ICM 'For the development of global standards for midwifery education and regulation. This is essential for improvement of standards and effectiveness of midwifery services and will save millions of lives of mothers and newborns around the globe. FIGO is proud of ICM's achievements and is willing to collaborate in this initiative,' said **Professor Gamal Serour - President FIGO**.

**Dr Flavia Bustreo, Assistant Director-General for Family and Community Health at the World Health Organization** said, 'We congratulate ICM on the development of these global standards for midwifery education and regulation. They provide midwives and other health professional organisations with an entry point to improve the quality of midwifery training and regulation and as a result, the quality of services for women and newborn.'

More information about the ICM's global standards can be found at [www.internationalmidwives.org](http://www.internationalmidwives.org)

Information and data sets from the State of the World's Midwifery Report can be found at [www.stateoftheworldsmidwifery.org](http://www.stateoftheworldsmidwifery.org)